



Poker World

Nicolae Sfeteu

Poker World

*online poker, rules, hands, strategy, cheating, casino, tournaments, poker jargon,
equipment, gambling, resources*

Nicolae Sfetcu

Published by Nicolae Sfetcu

© 2006 [Nicolae Sfetcu](#)

Poker is a microcosm of all we admire and disdain about capitalism and democracy. It can be rough-hewn or polished, warm or cold, charitable and caring or hard and impersonal. It is fickle and elusive, but ultimately it is fair, and right, and just. -- Lou Krieger

The content of this e-book is licensed under the [GNU Free Documentation License](#). It uses materials from the [Wikipedia](#).

[Poker](#) | [Rules](#) | [Strategy](#) | [Cheating](#) | [Casino](#) | [Tournaments](#) | [Poker jargon](#) | [Poker equipment](#) | [Gambling](#) | [License](#)

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Poker World | 1 |
| Poker | 16 |
| History | 16 |
| Game play | 17 |
| Computer players | 17 |
| Quotations | 18 |
| References | 19 |
| See also | 19 |
| Online poker | 19 |
| Overview | 20 |
| Legality | 21 |
| Integrity and fairness | 21 |
| Differences between online and conventional poker | 21 |
| Tracking play | 22 |
| References | 23 |
| Mental poker | 23 |
| Shuffling cards using commutative encryption | 23 |
| References | 24 |
| Computer poker players | 25 |
| Celebrities | 25 |
| Celebrities who play poker: | 25 |
| Poker Hall of Fame | 26 |
| See also | 27 |
| European Poker Players Hall of Fame | 27 |
| Criteria for Entry | 28 |
| Rules | 29 |
| Hands | 29 |
| General rules | 29 |
| Ranking of hands | 30 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Variations | 30 |
| See also | 31 |
| Starting hand..... | 31 |
| See also | 31 |
| Low hands..... | 32 |
| Ace-to-five low | 32 |
| Ace-to-six low | 33 |
| Deuce-to-seven low | 34 |
| High hands | 35 |
| Dominating hand..... | 35 |
| Nut hand | 36 |
| Drawing hand | 36 |
| Made hand..... | 37 |
| Non-standard Poker Hands..... | 37 |
| Cats and dogs | 38 |
| Kilters..... | 38 |
| Defined hands..... | 38 |
| No pair..... | 39 |
| One pair..... | 39 |
| Two pairs..... | 39 |
| Dead man's hand | 40 |
| Three of a kind..... | 41 |
| Straight..... | 41 |
| Examples..... | 41 |
| Wheel | 42 |
| Flush | 42 |
| Double-ace flush | 43 |
| Royal flush..... | 43 |
| Full house | 44 |
| Four of a kind..... | 44 |
| Straight flush..... | 44 |
| Five of a kind | 45 |
| Kicker | 45 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Betting | 46 |
| Terminology | 46 |
| Forced bets..... | 48 |
| Limits..... | 50 |
| Table stakes rules..... | 52 |
| See also | 54 |
| Agression..... | 54 |
| Steal | 55 |
| Defense..... | 55 |
| Big bet..... | 55 |
| Statistical Analysis | 56 |
| Examples..... | 56 |
| Big blind | 57 |
| Closed..... | 57 |
| Declaration..... | 57 |
| Declaring target in a split pot | 57 |
| Declaring number of cards to draw..... | 58 |
| Other declarations..... | 58 |
| Isolation | 58 |
| Pot | 59 |
| Split..... | 59 |
| Dead money..... | 60 |
| River | 60 |
| See also | 61 |
| Turn | 61 |
| Showdown | 61 |
| Chopping the blinds | 62 |
| Why players chop | 62 |
| Ethics of chopping..... | 62 |
| General etiquette | 62 |
| Reference | 63 |
| Table stakes..... | 63 |
| Playing cards | 64 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| History | 64 |
| Playing cards today..... | 68 |
| Playing card symbols in Unicode..... | 71 |
| Reference | 71 |
| See also | 72 |
| High card by suit..... | 72 |
| Wild cards | 73 |
| Bug | 74 |
| Burn cards..... | 74 |
| Community card | 74 |
| Cut | 75 |
| Procedure | 75 |
| Etiquette..... | 75 |
| Reasons..... | 76 |
| See also | 76 |
| Out..... | 76 |
| Stripped deck..... | 77 |
| Suited connectors..... | 77 |
| Rule variations | 78 |
| Overview..... | 78 |
| See also | 78 |
| High-low split..... | 79 |
| Freeroll..... | 79 |
| Variants | 80 |
| See also | 81 |
| List of poker variants..... | 81 |
| See also | 81 |
| Draw poker | 81 |
| Standard five-card draw | 82 |
| Other draw games | 83 |
| "Home" games..... | 86 |
| Ad hoc variants..... | 88 |
| Five-card draw | 88 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Sample deal..... | 89 |
| Variations | 90 |
| Stud poker | 90 |
| General variations | 91 |
| Specific variants | 91 |
| See also | 95 |
| Seven-card stud..... | 95 |
| Quick play overview | 95 |
| In-depth play rules..... | 96 |
| Sample deal..... | 97 |
| Five-card stud | 97 |
| Description of play | 97 |
| High-low and other variants | 98 |
| Community card poker | 99 |
| Texas hold 'em..... | 99 |
| Omaha hold 'em | 100 |
| Manila..... | 101 |
| "Home" games..... | 101 |
| Ad hoc variants..... | 104 |
| Texas hold 'em..... | 105 |
| Rules | 105 |
| Examples..... | 106 |
| Starting hand terminology and notation | 108 |
| Texas hold'em in popular culture | 108 |
| Bibliography | 110 |
| Texas hold 'em hands | 110 |
| Essentials..... | 110 |
| Specific hands | 111 |
| Nicknames of other starting hands..... | 113 |
| The hammer | 115 |
| Probability | 116 |
| Starting hands..... | 116 |
| Starting hands heads up..... | 117 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Pre-flop basic strategy..... | 118 |
| Starting hand strength by group | 118 |
| Recommended betting strategy by group..... | 119 |
| Group One..... | 119 |
| Group Two..... | 119 |
| Group Three..... | 119 |
| Group Four | 119 |
| Group Five | 120 |
| Group Six..... | 120 |
| Group Seven..... | 120 |
| Group Eight..... | 120 |
| Bluffs..... | 120 |
| No Group..... | 120 |
| See also | 120 |
| References..... | 120 |
| Post oak bluff | 120 |
| Poker Superstars Invitational Tournament..... | 121 |
| Crew..... | 121 |
| Structure | 121 |
| Trivia | 123 |
| WinHoldEm | 124 |
| Omaha hold 'em | 124 |
| Omaha eight-or-better..... | 125 |
| Variations | 127 |
| Horseshoes | 127 |
| Play of the hand..... | 127 |
| Betting structure..... | 127 |
| The showdown | 128 |
| Variations | 128 |
| Counterfeit | 128 |
| Counterfeiting in Texas Hold 'Em | 128 |
| Counterfeiting in Omaha Hold 'Em..... | 129 |
| Flop | 129 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| See also | 130 |
| Poker tracker | 130 |
| Misc. poker games..... | 130 |
| Stud Horse poker | 130 |
| Oxford stud | 130 |
| Billabong (and Shanghai) | 131 |
| Guts | 131 |
| Blind Man's Bluff..... | 132 |
| Blind man's bluff..... | 132 |
| Chicago | 133 |
| Hand scores | 133 |
| Basic rules | 133 |
| Variations | 134 |
| Kuhn poker | 134 |
| References | 134 |
| Strip poker | 135 |
| Rules | 135 |
| Popularity | 135 |
| Strategy..... | 137 |
| Hand strength | 137 |
| Improvement and pot odds | 137 |
| Bluffing | 137 |
| Position play..... | 138 |
| See also | 138 |
| Specific games..... | 138 |
| Probability | 138 |
| Frequency of 5 card poker hands..... | 138 |
| Derivation..... | 139 |
| Frequency of 7 card poker hands..... | 141 |
| See also | 141 |
| Bluffing | 142 |
| Strategy | 142 |
| Semi-bluffs | 143 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Randomizing devices | 143 |
| Bluff (the game) | 143 |
| Sandbagging | 143 |
| Check-raise | 145 |
| Game theory | 145 |
| Representation of games | 146 |
| Types of games | 147 |
| Uses of game theory | 149 |
| History of game theory | 152 |
| Notes | 153 |
| References | 153 |
| Fundamental theorem of poker | 154 |
| An example | 155 |
| Multi-way pots and implicit collusion | 155 |
| Morton's theorem | 156 |
| An example | 156 |
| Analysis | 157 |
| Psychology | 158 |
| Tells | 159 |
| Draw | 160 |
| Straight draws | 160 |
| Flush draws | 160 |
| Other draws | 161 |
| Position | 161 |
| Pot odds | 162 |
| Protection | 163 |
| Value | 163 |
| Bad beat | 164 |
| Example | 164 |
| Reacting to bad beats | 164 |
| Dickings | 165 |
| Bad beat jackpot | 165 |
| Tilt | 165 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Being "on tilt" | 166 |
| Putting others "on tilt" | 166 |
| Cheating | 168 |
| Introduction..... | 168 |
| Minimal-skill methods..... | 168 |
| Moderate-skill methods..... | 170 |
| Skilled methods..... | 170 |
| Collusion | 171 |
| See also | 173 |
| Bottom dealing..... | 173 |
| Bottom dealers..... | 173 |
| Second dealing..... | 173 |
| Casino | 175 |
| See also | 175 |
| Public cardroom rules | 175 |
| Records..... | 175 |
| Chips | 175 |
| Betting..... | 175 |
| Profitability of poker for casinos..... | 176 |
| Cards speak..... | 176 |
| The Saddle..... | 177 |
| Ring game | 177 |
| Public cardroom etiquette | 177 |
| Video poker | 179 |
| History | 179 |
| Operation of the game | 179 |
| Regulation | 179 |
| Kinds of Video Poker | 180 |
| Full Pay Games..... | 180 |
| Deuces Wild | 180 |
| Player's Clubs | 183 |
| Casino table games | 183 |
| Caribbean stud poker | 183 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Caribbean Stud Poker in the United Kingdom | 185 |
| See also | 186 |
| Pai gow poker | 186 |
| Object of the Game | 186 |
| The Deal..... | 186 |
| Hand Rankings..... | 187 |
| Determining a Win..... | 187 |
| Basic Strategy..... | 187 |
| Chinese poker | 189 |
| Three card poker | 190 |
| Pairplus | 190 |
| Ante and Play | 190 |
| Four card poker | 191 |
| Let it ride | 192 |
| How to Play | 193 |
| Pyramid poker | 194 |
| Online casino..... | 194 |
| Legality | 194 |
| Casino types..... | 194 |
| Games offered | 195 |
| Bonuses | 195 |
| Rogues..... | 196 |
| Player fraud | 196 |
| See also | 196 |
| Tournaments | 198 |
| Entry fees and prizes..... | 198 |
| Betting format..... | 199 |
| Types of poker | 200 |
| Tournament venues..... | 200 |
| Major tournaments | 200 |
| Multi-table tournament | 200 |
| Poker freerolls | 201 |
| Major poker tournaments..... | 201 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| North America | 201 |
| Europe..... | 201 |
| Chip monkeying..... | 202 |
| Chip race | 202 |
| World Series of Poker..... | 203 |
| Origins..... | 203 |
| Evolution..... | 203 |
| Harrah's Takes The Pot..... | 204 |
| The Marketing of the <i>WSOP</i> | 205 |
| The main event..... | 205 |
| World Poker Tour | 206 |
| Player of the Year | 207 |
| WPT Walk of Fames | 207 |
| See also | 207 |
| European Poker Tour | 207 |
| Monte Carlo Millions..... | 208 |
| Poker Million..... | 208 |
| Ultimate Poker Challenge..... | 208 |
| Format | 208 |
| Crew..... | 209 |
| World Championship of Online Poker | 209 |
| World Heads-Up Poker Championship..... | 209 |
| Poker jargon..... | 210 |
| 0–9..... | 210 |
| A | 210 |
| B | 212 |
| C..... | 216 |
| D | 220 |
| E | 224 |
| F..... | 225 |
| G | 227 |
| H | 228 |
| I..... | 230 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| J..... | 231 |
| K..... | 231 |
| L..... | 232 |
| M | 232 |
| N..... | 233 |
| O..... | 233 |
| P | 234 |
| Q..... | 235 |
| R..... | 235 |
| S..... | 237 |
| T | 239 |
| U..... | 239 |
| V | 240 |
| W..... | 240 |
| Blind stud | 240 |
| Roll your own..... | 241 |
| Rollout | 241 |
| Twist..... | 242 |
| Slang names for poker hands | 242 |
| Texas Hold 'Em Slang..... | 243 |
| Omaha Slang..... | 246 |
| The Saddle..... | 246 |
| Poker equipment..... | 247 |
| Purchasing poker equipment..... | 248 |
| Poker chips | 248 |
| Construction and design..... | 248 |
| Colors | 248 |
| Security..... | 249 |
| Buck | 250 |
| See also | 250 |
| Hole cam | 250 |
| Pokerspecs | 251 |
| Gambling..... | 252 |

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Legal aspects | 252 |
| Psychological aspects..... | 253 |
| Types of gambling | 253 |
| Staking systems..... | 258 |
| List of notable wagers..... | 259 |
| Associated word usage..... | 259 |
| By country | 259 |
| See also | 260 |
| Bibliography | 260 |
| Game..... | 260 |
| Definition | 260 |
| Games in philosophy | 261 |
| Anthropology of games | 261 |
| One-person games..... | 262 |
| Types of games | 263 |
| See also | 264 |
| References | 264 |
| Game classification | 264 |
| Game of skill | 266 |
| See also | 266 |
| Card games..... | 266 |
| Seating of players | 267 |
| The pack or deck..... | 267 |
| The deal | 267 |
| The rules | 268 |
| Types of card games..... | 269 |
| See also | 273 |
| Online gambling..... | 273 |
| Online poker | 273 |
| Online casinos..... | 273 |
| Online betting..... | 274 |
| Funds transfers | 274 |
| General legal issues..... | 274 |

NICOLAE SFETCU: POKER WORLD

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Problem gambling | 275 |
| License..... | 276 |
| GNU Free Documentation | 276 |
| GNU Free Documentation License | 276 |

Poker

Poker is a [card game](#), the most popular of a class of games called *vying games*, in which players with fully or partially concealed cards make wagers into a central *pot*, which is awarded to the remaining player or players with the best combination of cards. Poker can also refer to [video poker](#) which is a single-player game seen in casinos much like a slot machine.

The poker room at the Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

In order to play, one must learn the basic rules and procedures of the game, the values of the various combinations of cards (see [hand](#)), and the rules about betting limits (see [betting](#)). Some knowledge of the equipment used to play (see [poker equipment](#)) is useful. There are also many [variants of poker](#), loosely categorized as [draw poker](#), [stud poker](#), [community card poker](#) (a.k.a. "widow game"), and [miscellaneous poker](#) games. The most commonly played games of the first three categories are [five-card draw](#), [seven-card stud](#), and [Texas hold 'em](#), respectively; each being a common starting point for learning games of the type. Dealer's choice is a way to play poker where the dealer chooses what type of poker to play.

History

The history of poker is a matter of some debate. The name of the game likely descended from the French *poque*, which descended from the German *pochen* ('to knock'), but it is not clear whether the origins of poker itself lie with the games bearing those names. It closely resembles the Persian game of *as nas*, and may have been taught to French settlers in New Orleans by Persian sailors. It is commonly regarded as sharing ancestry with the Renaissance game of *primero* and the French *brelan*. The English game *brag* (earlier *bragg*) clearly descended from *brelan* and incorporated bluffing (though the concept was known in other games by that time). It is quite possible that all of these earlier games influenced the development of poker as it exists now.

English actor Joseph Crowell reported that the game was played in New Orleans in 1829, with a deck of 20 cards, four players betting on which player's hand was the most valuable. Jonathan H. Green's book, *An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling* (G. B. Zieber, Philadelphia, 1843), described the spread of the game from there to the rest of the country by Mississippi riverboats, on which [gambling](#) was a common pastime.

Soon after this spread, the full 52-card English deck was used, and the [flush](#) was introduced. During the American Civil War, many additions were made, including [draw poker](#), [stud poker](#) (the five-card variant), and the [straight](#). Further American developments followed, such as the [wild card](#) (around 1875), [lowball](#) and [split-pot poker](#) (around 1900), and [community card poker](#) games (around 1925). Spread of the game to other countries, particularly in Asia, is often attributed to the U.S. military.

The game and [jargon](#) of poker have become important parts of American culture and English culture. Such phrases as *ace in the hole*, *ace up one's sleeve*, *beats me*, *blue chip*, *call one's bluff*, *cash in*, *high roller*, *pass the buck*, *poker face*, *stack up*, *up the ante*, *when the chips are down*, [wild card](#), and others are used in everyday conversation even by those unaware of their origins at the poker table.

Modern [tournament](#) play became popular in American casinos after the [World Series of Poker](#) began in 1970. It was also during that decade that the first serious strategy books appeared, notably *The Theory of Poker* by David Sklansky (ISBN 1880685000), *Super System* by Doyle Brunson (ISBN 0931444014), and *The Book of Tells* by Mike Caro (ISBN 0897461002).

Poker's popularity has experienced an unprecedented spike in recent years, largely due to the introduction of [online poker](#) and the invention of the hole-card camera which finally turned the game into a spectator sport. Viewers can now follow the action and drama of the game, and broadcasts of poker tournaments such as the [World Series of Poker](#) and the [World Poker Tour](#) have brought in huge audiences for cable and satellite TV distributors.

Game play

The game of poker is played in hundreds of [variations](#), but the following overview of game play applies to most of them.

Depending on the game rules, one or more players may be required to place an initial amount of money into the pot before the cards are dealt. These are called forced bets and come in three forms: antes, blinds, and bring-ins.

Like most [card games](#), the dealer shuffles the [deck of cards](#). The deck is then [cut](#), and the appropriate number of cards are dealt face-down to the players. In a [casino](#) a "house" dealer handles the cards for each hand, but a *button* (any small item used as a marker, also called a *buck*) is rotated among the players to determine the order of dealing and betting in certain games. In a home game, the right to deal the cards typically rotates among the players clockwise, but a *button* may still be used.

After the initial deal, the first of what may be several [betting](#) rounds begins. Between rounds, the players' hands *develop* in some way, often by being dealt additional cards or replacing cards previously dealt. During a round of betting, there will always be a *current bet amount*, which is the total amount of money bet in this round by the player who bet last in this round. To keep better track of this, it is conventional for players to not place their bets directly into the pot (called *splashing* the pot), but rather place them in front of themselves toward the pot, until the betting round is over. When the round is over, the bets are then gathered into the pot.

After the first betting round is completed (every participating player having called an equal amount), there may be more rounds in which more cards are dealt in various ways, followed by further rounds of betting (into the same central pot). At any time during the first or subsequent betting rounds, if one player makes a bet and all other players fold, the deal ends immediately, the single remaining player is awarded the pot, no cards are shown, no more rounds are dealt, and the next deal begins. This is what makes it possible to [bluff](#).

At the end of the last betting round, if more than one player remains, there is a [showdown](#) in which the players reveal their previously hidden cards and evaluate their [hands](#). The player with the best hand according to the poker variant being played wins the pot.

Computer players

The game of poker (or at least most of the variants) is considered to be computationally intractable. However, methods are being developed to at least approximate perfect strategy from

the [game theory](#) perspective in the heads-up (two player) game, and increasingly good systems are being created for the multi-player or ring game. Perfect strategy has multiple meanings in this context. From a game-theoretic optimal point of view, a perfect strategy is a minimax one that cannot expect to lose to any other player's strategy; however, optimal strategy can vary in the presence of sub-optimal players who have weaknesses that can be exploited. In this case, a perfect strategy would be one that correctly or closely models those weaknesses and takes advantage of them to make a profit. Some of these systems are based on Bayes theorem, Nash equilibrium, Monte Carlo simulation, and Neural networks. A large amount of the research is being done at the University of Alberta by the GAMES group led by Jonathan Schaeffer who developed Poki and PsOpt.

A major part of the skill of live poker games, however, is guessing at the strength of a player's hand by identifying [tells](#) made by other players, while concealing one's own. This fundamentally differs from games like chess where all information about the game's current state is public. As a computer would not make any tells, playing against a computer would fundamentally change the nature of the game far more than chess and similar games.

Although you cannot read a computer opponent, playing against computer opponents can still help you sharpen your skills by learning how to count outs and play the percentages. With the advancing technology of artificial intelligence, computer players can be created to incorporate bluffs and other human-like decisions.

Quotations

Poker is a microcosm of all we admire and disdain about capitalism and democracy. It can be rough-hewn or polished, warm or cold, charitable and caring or hard and impersonal. It is fickle and elusive, but ultimately it is fair, and right, and just. — Lou Krieger

If you can't spot the sucker within the first half hour at the table, then you are the sucker. — common poker saying, as spoken by Matt Damon in *Rounders*; originally attributed to Amarillo Slim

Whether he likes it or not, a man's character is stripped bare at the poker table; if the other players read him better than he does, he has only himself to blame. Unless he is both able and prepared to see himself as others do, flaws and all, he will be a loser in cards, as in life. — Anthony Holden (from *Big Deal*)

There are few things that are so unpardonably neglected in our country as poker... Why, I have known clergymen, good men, kindhearted, liberal, sincere, and all that, who did not know the meaning of a 'flush'. It is enough to make one ashamed of one's species. — Mark Twain

Nobody is always a winner, and anybody who says he is, is either a liar or doesn't play poker. — Amarillo Slim

They anticipate losing when they sit down and I try my darnedest not to disappoint one of them. — Amarillo Slim

Poker is a game of people... It's not the hand I hold, it's the people that I play with. — Amarillo Slim

[Hold 'em](#) is to [stud](#) what chess is to checkers. — Johnny Moss

The guy who invented poker was bright, but the guy who invented the chip was a genius.
— Big Julie

Last night I stayed up late playing poker with Tarot cards. I got a [full house](#) and four people died. — Steven Wright

Cards are war, in disguise of a sport. — Charles Lamb, *Essays of Elia* (1832)

Poker is a godless game, full of random pain. — Andy Bloch

You call this one and it's all over, baby. — Scotty Nguyen, during the 1998 World Series of Poker. Down to him and one other player, he said this to his opponent who called, and it was all over.

Mae West: *Is poker a game of chance?* W.C. Fields: *Not the way I play it.* — My Little Chickadee

References

- Brunson, Doyle (1979). *Doyle Brunson's Super System*, Cardoza. ISBN 1580420818.
- Sklansky, David (1989). *The Theory of Poker* (3rd Ed), Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685000.
- Vorhaus, John (2002). *Killer Poker*, Lyle Stuart. ISBN 0818406305.
- Ernest, James; Selinker, Mike; Foglio, Phil (2005). *Dealer's Choice: The Complete Handbook of Saturday Night Poker*, Overlook Press. ISBN 1585676543.
- Caro, Mike (1978). *Caro's Book of Poker Tells*, Cardoza. ISBN 1580420826.

See also

- [Betting](#)
- [List of miscellaneous poker variants](#)
- [Poker hands](#)
- [Online poker](#)
- [Major poker tournaments](#)
- [Playing cards](#)
- [Poker jargon](#)
- [Rule variations](#)
- [Cheating in poker](#)
- [Poker strategy](#)

[Online poker](#) | [Celebrities](#)

Online poker

Online poker is the game of [poker](#) played over the Internet (online). It has been responsible for a dramatic increase in the number of poker players worldwide, and as of December 2003, revenues from online poker were estimated at US\$34 million per month.

Overview

Traditional (or "brick and mortar", B&M) venues for playing poker, such as [casinos](#) and poker rooms, may be intimidating for novice players and are located in geographically disparate locations. Brick and mortar casinos are also reticent to promote poker because it is very difficult for them to profit from the activity. Though the rake, or time charge, of traditional casinos is often very high, the opportunity costs of running a poker room are even higher. Brick and mortar casinos often make much more money by removing poker rooms and adding more slot machines.

Online venues, by contrast, are dramatically cheaper because they have much smaller overhead costs. For example, adding another table does not take up valuable space like it would for a brick and mortar casino. Online poker rooms tend to be viewed as more player-friendly. For example, the software may prompt the player when it is his or her turn to act. Online poker rooms also allow the players to play for very low stakes (as low as 1¢) and often offer [poker freerolls](#) (where there is no entry fee), attracting beginners.

Online venues may be more vulnerable to certain types of fraud, especially collusion between players. However, they also have collusion detection abilities that do not exist in brick and mortar casinos. For example, online poker room security employees can look at the "hand history" of the cards previously played by any player on the site, making patterns of behavior easier to detect than in a casino where colluding players can simply fold their hands without anyone ever knowing the strength of their holding. Online poker rooms also check player's IP addresses in order to prevent players at the same household or at known open proxy servers from playing on the same tables.

The major online poker sites offer varying features to entice new players. One common feature is to offer tournaments called satellites by which the winners gain entry to real-life poker tournaments. It was through one such tournament that Chris Moneymaker won his entry to the 2003 [World Series of Poker](#). He went on to win the main event causing shock in the poker world. The 2004 World Series featured triple the number of players over the 2003 turnout. At least four players in the WSOP final table won their entry through an online cardroom. Like Moneymaker, 2004 winner Greg "Fossilman" Raymer also won his entry at the PokerStars online cardroom.

In December 2003 it was reported that online poker revenues stood at around \$34m (€ 40m) per month and were growing by 27% per month. By March 2005, at peak times approximately 100,000 people were playing for real money at the various cardrooms with a like number playing free games.

In October 2004, Sportingbet Plc, the world's largest publicly traded online gaming company (SBT.L), announced the acquisition of ParadisePoker.com, one of the online poker industry's first and largest cardrooms. The acquisition marked the first time an online cardroom was owned by a public company. Since then, several other cardroom parent companies have gone public.

In June 2005, PartyGaming, the parent company of the largest online cardroom, went public on the London Stock Exchange, achieving an initial public offering market value in excess of \$8

billion dollars. At the time of the IPO, ninety-two percent of Party Gaming's income came from poker operations.

Legality

From a legal perspective, online poker may differ in some ways from online casino gambling, but many of the same issues do apply. For a discussion of the legality of online gambling in general, see [online gambling](#).

Online poker is legal and regulated in many countries including the United Kingdom and several nations in and around the Caribbean Sea.

In February 2005 the North Dakota House of Representatives passed a bill to legalize and regulate online poker and online poker cardroom operators in the State. Testifying before the State Senate, the CEO of one online cardroom, Paradise Poker, pledged to relocate to the state if the bill became law. However, the measure was defeated by the State Senate in March 2005.

Jim Kasper (R-Fargo), one of the main proponents of the legalization bill, has vowed to continue his lobbying efforts, stating that he is "not putting away the idea of getting into Internet gaming licenses in North Dakota" and that the "revenue we missed is too great to pass up."

Integrity and fairness

As with other forms of online gambling, many critics question whether the operators of such games - especially those located in jurisdictions separate from most of their players - might be engaging in fraud themselves.

Internet discussion forums are rife with unproven allegations of non-random card dealing, possibly to favour house-employed players or "bots" (poker playing software disguised as a human opponent), or to give multiple players good hands thus increasing the bets and the rake, or simply to prevent new players from losing so quickly that they become discouraged. However, there is little more than anecdotal evidence to support such claims, and others argue that the rake is sufficiently large that such abuses would be unnecessary and foolish. Many claim to see lots of "bad beats" with large hands pitted against others all too often at a rate that seems to be a lot more common than in live games. But this theory might be refuted by the fact that online cardrooms deal more hands per hour. Because online players get to see more hands, their likelihood of seeing more improbable bad beats or randomly large pots is also increased.

However, to date there has been at least one site, ProPoker.com, that has been found to use serverside bots that play with the knowledge of players' cards and the cards yet to be dealt. It has since been shut down, with many players losing the funds they had on the site.

Many online poker sites are certified by bodies such as the Kahnawake Gaming Commission, and major auditing firms like PricewaterhouseCoopers review the fairness of the shuffle and payouts for some sites.

The problem of finding a protocol to play poker without a trusted dealer is called [mental poker](#).

Differences between online and conventional poker

There are substantial differences between online poker gaming and conventional, in-person gaming.

One obvious difference is that players do not sit right across from each other, removing any ability to observe others' reactions and body language. Instead, online poker players learn to focus more keenly on betting patterns, reaction time and other behavior **tells** that are not physical in nature. Since poker is a game that requires adaptability, successful online players learn to master the new frontiers of their surroundings.

Another less obvious difference is the rate of play. In brick and mortar casinos the dealer has to collect the cards, then shuffle and deal them after every hand. Due to this and other delays common in offline casinos, the average rate of play is around thirty hands per hour. Online casinos, however, do not have these delays; the dealing and shuffling are instant, there are no delays relating to counting chips (for a split pot), and on average the play is faster due to "auto-action" buttons (where the player selects his action before his turn). It is not uncommon for an online poker table to average sixty to eighty hands per hour.

This large difference in rate of play has created another effect among online poker players. In the brick and mortar casino, the only real way to increase your earnings is to increase your limit. In the online world players have another option, play more tables. Unlike a physical casino where it would be nearly impossible to play multiple tables at once, most online poker rooms allow a player to be on up to 4 tables at once. For example, a player may make around \$10 per 100 hands at a lower limit game. In a casino, this would earn them under \$4 an hour, which minus dealer tips would probably barely break even. In an online poker room, the same player with the same win rate could play four tables at once, which at 60 hands per hour each would result in an earning of \$24/hour, which is a modest salary for somebody playing online poker. Some online players even play eight or more tables at once, in an effort to increase their winnings.

Another important change results from the fact that online poker rooms, in some cases, offer online poker schools that teach the basics and significantly speed up the learning curve for novices. Many online poker rooms also provide free money play so that players may practice these skills in various poker games and limits without the risk of losing real money. People who previously had no way to learn and improve because they had no one to play with now have the ability to learn the game much more quickly and gain invaluable experience from free money play.

Tracking play

Tracking poker play in a B&M casino is very difficult. You can easily monitor your winnings, but tracking any detailed statistics about your game requires a player to take notes after each hand, which is cumbersome and distracting.

Conversely, tracking poker play online is easy. Most online poker rooms support "Hand Histories" text files which track every action both you and your opponents made during each hand. The ability to specifically track every single played hand has many advantages. Many third-party software applications process hand history files and return detailed summaries of poker play. These not only include exact tallies of rake and winnings, which are useful for tax purposes, but also offer detailed statistics about the person's poker play. Serious players use these

statistics to check for weaknesses or "leaks" (mistakes that leak money from their winnings) in their game. Such detailed analysis of poker play was never available in the past, but with the growth of online poker play, it is now commonplace among nearly all serious and professional online poker players.

References

- *Poker on the Internet* by Andrew Kinsman. ISBN 1904468063.

[Mental poker](#) | Computer poker players

Mental poker

The **mental poker** problem concerns how to play a fair game of [poker](#) without the need for a trusted dealer.

Today this is an important problem due to the sharp rise in interest in [online poker](#). The problem arises because of the need for a way to ensure the players a fair game without needing to trust the dealer (usually an internet gambling site). For instance the dealer might give some players an advantage in the cards dealt, giving them an upper hand. This problem can be compared to the problem of flipping a coin over distance.

Several protocols for doing this have been suggested, the first by Adi Shamir, Ron Rivest and Len Adleman (the creators of the RSA-encryption protocol).

Shuffling cards using commutative encryption

One possible algorithm for shuffling cards without the use of a trusted third party is to use a commutative encryption scheme. A commutative scheme means that if some data is encrypted more than once, the order in which you decrypt this data will not matter.

Example: Alice has a plaintext message. She encrypts this, producing a garbled ciphertext which she gives this to Bob. Bob encrypts the ciphertext again, using the same scheme as Alice but with another key. When decrypting this double encrypted message, if the encryption scheme is commutative, it will not matter who decrypts first.

The algorithm

An algorithm for shuffling cards using commutative encryption would be as follows:

1. Alice and Bob agree on a certain "deck" of cards. In practice, this means they agree on a set of numbers or other data that each represents a card.
2. Alice picks an encryption key A and uses this to encrypt each card of the deck.
3. Alice shuffles the cards.
4. Alice passes the encrypted and shuffled deck to Bob. With the encryption in place, Bob cannot know which card is which.

5. Bob picks an encryption key B and uses this to encrypt each card of the encrypted and shuffled deck.
6. Bob shuffles the deck.
7. Bob passes the double encrypted and shuffled deck back to Alice.
8. Alice decrypts each card using her key A . This still leaves Bob's encryption in place though so she cannot know which card is which.
9. Alice picks one encryption key for each card (A_1, A_2, \dots) and encrypts them individually.
10. Alice passes the deck to Bob.
11. Bob decrypts each card using his key B . This still leaves Alice's individual encryption in place though so he cannot know which card is which.
12. Bob picks one encryption key for each card (B_1, B_2, \dots) and encrypts them individually.
13. Bob passes the deck back to Alice.
14. Alice publishes the deck for everyone playing (in this case only Alice and Bob, see below on expansion though).

The deck is now shuffled.

This algorithm may be expanded for an arbitrary number of players. Players Carol, Dave and so forth need only repeat steps 2-4 and 8-10.

During the game, Alice and Bob will pick cards from the deck, identified in which order they are placed in the shuffled deck. When either player wants to see their cards, they will request the corresponding keys from the other player. That player, upon checking that the requesting player is indeed entitled to look at the cards, passes the individual keys for those cards to the other player. The check is to ensure that the player does not try to request keys for cards that does not belong to that player.

Example: Alice has picked cards 1 to 5 in the shuffled deck. Bob has picked cards 6 to 10. Bob requests to look at his allotted cards. Alice agrees that Bob is entitled to look at cards 6 to 10 and gives him her individual card keys A_6 to A_{10} . Bob decrypts his cards by using both Alice's keys and his own for these cards, B_6 to B_{10} . Bob can now see the cards. Alice cannot know which cards Bob has because she does not have access to Bob keys B_6 to B_{10} which are required to decrypt the cards.

Weakness

Depending on the deck agreed upon, this algorithm may be weak. When encrypting data, certain properties of this data may be preserved from the plaintext to the ciphertext. This may be used to "tag" certain cards. Therefore, the parties must agree on a deck where no cards have properties that are preserved during encryption.

References

- Goldwasser, S. and Micali, S. 1982. Probabilistic encryption & how to play mental poker keeping secret all partial information. In Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual ACM Symposium on theory of Computing.

Computer poker players

The game of [poker](#) (or at least most of the variants) is considered to be computationally unsolvable. However, methods are being developed to at least approximate perfect strategy from the [game theory](#) perspective in the heads-up (two player) game, and increasingly good systems are being created for the multi-player or ring game. Perfect strategy has multiple meanings in this context. From a game-theoretic optimal point of view, a perfect strategy is one that cannot lose to any other player's strategy; however, optimal strategy can vary in the presence of sub-optimal players who have weaknesses that can be exploited. In this case, perfect strategy would be one that correctly or closely models those weaknesses and takes advantage of them to make a profit. Some of these systems are based on Bayes theorem, Nash equilibrium, Monte Carlo simulation and Neural networks. A large amount of the research is being done at the University of Alberta by the GAMES group led by Jonathan Schaeffer who developed Poki and PsOpt.

Celebrities

Celebrities who play poker:

I

- Paul Ince

R cont.

- Andy Richter
- Tanya Roberts
- Dennis Rodman
- Adam Rodriguez
- Mimi Rogers
- Ray Romano
- Mickey Rooney
- Stephen Root
- Arnold Rothstein
- Paul Rudd
- Sara Rue
- Ian Rush
- Salman Rushdie

S cont.

- Nicole Sullivan
- Mena Suvari
- Alison Sweeney
- Wanda Sykes

M

- Rocco Mediate
- Christopher Meloni
- Seth Meyers
- Kathryn Morris
- Mark Moses

T

- Amber Tamblyn
- Dennis Taylor
- Phil Taylor
- John Thomson (actor)
- Willie Thorne
- Maura Tierney
- Jennifer Tilly
- Mike Tindall
- Alex Trebek
- Travis Tritt

N

- Kathy Najimy
- Dave Navarro
- Kevin Nealon
- Richard Nixon

S

- Anne Savage (DJ)
- Telly Savalas

O

- Jerry O'Connell
- Rosie O'Donnell
- Gail O'Grady
- Catherine O'Hara
- Ronnie O'Sullivan
- Philip Olivier

P

- Norman Pace
- Tom Parker Bowles
- Andrea Parker
- Barry Paskin
- Wendy Pepper
- Matthew Perry
(actor)
- Raj Persaud
- Mekhi Phifer
- Lou Diamond Phillips
- Todd Phillips
- Amy Poehler
- Michael Praed
- Laura Prepon
- Emily Procter

Q

- Colin Quinn

R

- William Rehnquist
- Caroline Rhea

[Poker Hall of Fame](#) | [European Poker Players Hall of Fame](#)

Poker Hall of Fame

The **Poker Hall of Fame** is a group of [poker](#) players who have played poker well against top competition for high stakes over a long period of time. It is awarded by Binion's Horseshoe casino.

Members of the Poker Hall of Fame include (with year of induction):

- Johnny Moss, 1979
- "Nick the Greek" Dandolos, 1979
- Felton "Corky" McCorquodale, 1979
- Red Winn, 1979
- Sid Wyman, 1979
- "Wild Bill" Hickok, 1979
- Edmond Hoyle, 1979
- T. "Blondie" Forbes, 1980
- Bill Boyd, 1981
- Tom Abdo, 1982
- Joe Bernstein, 1983
- Murph Harrold, 1984
- Red Hodges, 1985
- Henry Green, 1986
- Walter Clyde "Puggy" Pearson, 1987
- Doyle Brunson, 1988
- Jack "Treetop" Straus, 1988
- Fred "Sarge" Ferris, 1989
- Benny Binion, 1990
- "Chip" Reese, 1991
- "Amarillo Slim" Preston, 1992
- Jack Keller, 1993
- Little Man Popwell, 1996
- Roger Moore, 1997
- Stu Ungar, 2001
- Lyle Berman, 2002
- Johnny Chan, 2002
- Bobby Baldwin, 2003
- Berry Johnston, 2004
- Jack Binion, 2005
- Crandell Addington, 2005

See also

- [World Poker Tour Walk of Fame](#)

European Poker Players Hall of Fame

The **European Poker Players Hall of Fame** was created by [poker](#) professional Bruce "Elvis Senior" Atkinson to recognise European poker players who have made great achievements throughout their poker careers.

At present, four new players are added per year, approximately once per quarter.

Criteria for Entry

1. The player must have played poker at the highest level, either in cash games or tournament play.
2. The player should be an ideal ambassador for the game.
3. The player should have won a major championship.
4. The player must be recommended by his or her peers.

Rules

[Hands](#) | [Betting](#) | [Playing cards](#) | [Rule variations](#) | [Variants](#)

Hands

A **hand** in [poker](#) can mean any of the following:

1. A unit of play consisting of a deal, one or more rounds of betting, and possibly a showdown.
2. A set of five cards with a certain value. For example, the hand **AH 10H 9H 5H 3H** is a "flush", a hand that is valuable because each card is of the same suit.
3. A player's set of non-communal cards.

The second and third definitions are often used interchangeably. For example, in [Texas hold 'em](#), a player holding **AC KS**, with a board of **AH KC KD 7S 3D**, might say, "my hand is ace-king". However, his best 5-card hand (the portion of the hand which determines value) is the kings-over-aces full house.

General rules

The following general rules apply to evaluating poker hands, whatever set of hand values are used.

- Individual cards are ranked **A** (high), **K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2** (low).

Individual card ranks are often used to evaluate hands that contain no pairs or other special combinations, or to rank the [kickers](#) of otherwise equal hands. The Ace is ranked low in ace-to-five and ace-to-six lowball games.

- Suits have no value.

The suits of the cards are mainly used in determining whether a hand fits a certain category (specifically the [Flush](#) and [Straight flush](#) hands). In most variants, if two players have hands that are identical except for suit, then they are tied and split the pot. Sometimes a ranking called [high card by suit](#) is used for randomly selecting a player to deal.

- A hand always consists of five cards.

In games where more than five cards are available to each player, hands are ranked by choosing some five-card subset according to the rules of the game, and comparing that five-card hand against the five-card hands of the other players. Whatever cards remain after choosing the five to be played are of no consequence in determining the winner. (For example, when comparing identical full houses, there are no "kickers".)

- Hands are ranked first by category, then by individual card ranks.

That is, even the minimum qualifying hand in a certain category defeats all hands in all lower categories. The smallest [Two pair](#) hand, for example, defeats all hands with just [One pair](#) or [No pair](#). Only between two hands in the same category are card ranks used to break ties. The highest single card in each flush or straight is used to break ties (the

Ace-through-five straight is the lowest straight, the Ace being a low card in this context). Within two **Two pair** hands, the higher pairs are first compared. If they tie, then the secondary pairs are compared, and then finally the **kicker**.

- The order in which cards are dealt is unimportant.

For ease of explanation, hands are shown here neatly arranged, but a poker hand has the same value no matter what order the cards are received in.

Ranking of hands

The most common ranking of hands is as follows:

- **Royal flush:** Five cards in sequence and of the same suit, starting from the Ace down to the 10. *Example: AS KS QS JS 10S* (Note: A Royal Flush is not a category of hand in and of itself, it is simply the highest-valued straight flush, and thus also the highest-valued hand. Since it is mentioned often in the context of hand rankings, it is worth noting in this list.)
- **Straight flush:** Any five cards in sequence and of the same suit. *Example: QD JD 10D 9D 8D*
- **Four of a kind:** A hand with four cards of the same rank. *Example: 4C 4D 4H 4S 9H*
- **Full house:** A hand with three cards of one rank and two of another. *Example: 8C 8D 8S KH KS*
- **Flush:** Five cards of the same suit. *Example: KS JS 8S 4S 3S*
- **Straight:** Five cards in sequence. (The ace can be considered higher than the king, or lower than the two.) *Example: 5D 4H 3S 2D AD*
- **Three of a kind:** Three cards of the same rank. *Example: 7C 7H 7S KD 2S*
- **Two pair:** Two cards of one rank, two of another. *Example: AC AD 8H 8S QS*
- **One pair:** Two cards of the same rank. *Example: 9H 9S AC JS 4H*
- **No pair:** Also known as a high card hand. The following example is considered "Ace high." *Example: AD 10D 9S 5C 4C*

The hands are ranked in this order because of their relative probabilities, with rarer hands ranking above more common hands. See also [Poker probability](#).

An additional hand type, **five of a kind**, exists when **wild cards** are used. Five of a kind outranks the straight flush (and therefore the royal flush too) making it the most valuable hand.

Variations

Some games called **lowball** or **low poker** are played where players strive not for the highest ranking of the above combinations but for the lowest ranking hand. There are three methods of ranking low hands, called **Ace-to-five low**, **Deuce-to-seven low**, and **Ace-to-six low**. The **ace-to-five** method is most common. A sub-variant within this category is **high-low poker**, in which the highest and lowest hands split the pot (with the highest hand taking any odd chips if the pot does not divide equally). Sometimes straights and/or flushes count in determining which hand is highest but not in determining which hand is lowest (being reckoned as a no-pair hand in the

latter instance), so that a player with such a holding can win both ways and thus take the entire pot.

Certain variants use hands of only three cards, either high or low. Three-card low hands can be ranked by any of the three methods above, although with three cards they become **ace-to-three** (rather than ace-to-five), **deuce-to-five**, and **ace-to-four**. The ace-to-three method is the most common, just as the ace-to-five method is most common method for five cards. Three-card high hands are ranked in one of two ways: either with or without straights and flushes. Without them (which is the most common, and used such games as [Chinese poker](#)), the hands are simply **no pair**, **one pair**, and **three of a kind**. If you add straights and flushes, the order of hands should be changed to reflect the correct probabilities: **no pair**, **one pair**, **flush**, **straight**, **three of a kind**, **straight flush**. This order is used, for example, in Mambo stud.

Some poker games are played with a deck that has been [stripped](#) of certain cards, usually low-ranking ones. For example, the Australian game of Manila uses a 32-card deck in which all cards below the rank of **7** are removed, and Mexican stud removes the **8s**, **9s**, and **10s**. In both of these games, a flush ranks above a full house, because having fewer cards of each suit available makes flushes rarer.

Some games add one or more [unconventional hands](#), or have special exceptions to the rules above. For example, in the game of [Pai gow poker](#) as played in Nevada, a **Wheel** (**5-4-3-2-A**) ranks above a king-high straight, but below an ace-high straight. This is not the case in California, where the nearly identical game is played under the name Double-hand poker using traditional hand values.

See also

- [List of slang names for poker hands](#)

[Starting hand](#) | [Low hands](#) | [High hands](#) | [Dominating hand](#) | [Nut hand](#) | [Drawing hand](#) |
[Made hand](#) | [Non-standard Poker Hands](#) | [Defined hands](#) | [Kicker](#)

Starting hand

In [poker](#), the **starting hand** is the initial set of cards dealt to each player before any voluntary betting takes place. For example, in [Seven-card stud](#) this is two downcards and one upcard; in [Texas hold'em](#) it is two downcards; in [Five-card draw](#) it is five cards.

The one decision made by every poker player on every deal of every game is whether to continue playing that hand after seeing that first set of cards. Since making this decision correctly will lead to the most long-run profit for a skilled player, players often put considerable study into what the appropriate starting hand "standards" are for the game being played.

Optimal starting hand standards can be very sensitive to factors such as the [betting structure](#) of a game, [position](#), and the character of the other players, as well as the rules of the game being played.

See also

- [Poker](#)
- [Dominating hand](#)
- [Poker strategy](#)

Low hands

Some forms of [poker](#), often called [lowball](#), sometimes called "low poker," reward poor poker hands (in the traditional sense). There are three common variations on this idea, differing in whether aces are treated as high cards or low cards, and whether or not [straights](#) and [flushes](#) are used. The methods are:

- [Ace-to-five low](#): The lowest possible hand is **5-4-3-2-A**, called a [wheel](#). Aces are low and straights and flushes are ignored. This is the most common method.
- [Ace-to-six low](#): Also called *6-4 low*, since the lowest possible hand is **6-4-3-2-A**. Aces are low and straights and flushes count as high hands.
- [Deuce-to-seven low](#): Also called *7-5 low*, since the lowest possible hand is **7-5-4-3-2**. Almost the direct inverse of traditional [high hand](#) poker. Aces are high and straights and flushes count as high hands. Since aces are high, **A-5-4-3-2** is not a straight, but just ace-high no pair.
- Deuce-to-six low: The other, mostly unused, possibility would be *6-5 low*. Aces are low, straights and flushes are ignored.

Some games are played [high-low split](#), where the player with the best traditional poker hand (called the [high hand](#)) splits the pot with the best low hand. The low hand is decided by one of the methods above. According to Morehead, Official Rules of Card Games, the low hand in high-low is generally the deuce-to-seven low, although many on-line casinos use ace-to-five low, with a qualifier, e.g., no card higher than an 8. Low hands tie more frequently than high hands, especially in [community card](#) games, so it is not uncommon for such a hand to win a small fraction of a poker pot. For example, if one player has the high hand on [showdown](#), and two other players tie for the best low hand, the high hand wins half of the pot and each low hand wins only a quarter of the pot. Playing ace-to-five high-low greatly increases the chances of the "scoop"--winning both hands--because a flush or straight counts high, but by rule, does not count low. See [Rule variations \(poker\)](#)

[Ace-to-five low](#) | [Ace-to-six low](#) | [Deuce-to-seven low](#)

Ace-to-five low

[Ace-to-five low](#) is the most common method for evaluating [low hands](#) in [poker](#), nearly universal in American casinos, especially in [high-low split](#) games.

As in all [low hand](#) games, pairs count against the player. That is, any hand with no pair defeats any hand with a pair; one pair hands defeat two pair or three-of-a-kind, etc. No-pair hands are compared starting with the highest ranking card, just as in high poker, except that the

high hand loses. In ace-to-five low, [straights](#) and [flushes](#) are ignored, and aces play as the lowest card.

For example, the hand **8-5-4-3-2** defeats **9-7-6-4-3**, because eight-high is lower than nine-high. The hand **7-6-5-4-3** defeats both, because seven-high is lower still, even though it would be a straight if played for high. Aces are low, so **8-5-4-3-A** defeats **8-5-4-3-2**. Also, **A-A-9-5-3** (a pair of aces) defeats **2-2-5-4-3** (a pair of deuces), but both of those would lose to any no-pair hand such as **K-J-8-6-4**. In the rare event that hands with pairs tie, kickers are used just as in high poker (but reversed): **3-3-6-4-2** defeats **3-3-6-5-A**.

This is called ace-to-five low because the lowest (and therefore best) possible hand is **5-4-3-2-A**, called a [wheel](#) or "bicycle". The next best possible hand is **6-4-3-2-A**, followed by **6-5-3-2-A**, **6-5-4-2-A**, **6-5-4-3-A**, **6-5-4-3-2**, **7-4-3-2-A**, **7-5-3-2-A**, etc.

When speaking, low hands are referred to by their highest ranking card or cards. Any nine-high hand can be called "a nine", and is defeated by any "eight". Two cards are frequently used: the hand **8-6-5-4-2** can be called "an eight-six" and will defeat "an eight-seven" such as **8-7-5-4-A**.

Another common notation is calling a particular low hand "smooth" or "rough." A smooth low hand is one where the remaining cards after the highest card are themselves very low; a rough low hand is one where the remaining cards are high. For instance, **8-7-6-3-A** would be referred to as a "rough eight," but **8-4-3-2-A** would be referred to as a "smooth eight."

[High-low split](#) games with ace-to-five low are usually played [cards speak](#), that is, without a [declaration](#). Frequently a qualifer is required for low (typically 8-high or 9-high). Some hands (particularly small straights and flushes) may be both the low hand and the high hand, and are particularly powerful (or particularly dangerous if they are mediocre both ways). Winning both halves of the pot in a split-pot game is called "scooping" or "hogging" the pot. The perfect hand in such a game is called a "steel wheel", **5-4-3-2-A** of one suit, which plays both as perfect low and a [straight flush](#) high. Note that it is possible--though astronomically unlikely--to have this hand and still lose money! If the pot has three players, and one other player has a mixed-suit wheel, and a third has better straight flush, the higher straight flush wins the high half of the pot, and you and the other wheel split the low half, so you have won only a quarter of a three-way pot!

Ace-to-five lowball, a five-card draw variant, is often played with a joker added to the deck. The joker plays as the lowest card not already present in the hand (in other words, it is a [wild card](#)): **7-5-4-Joker-A**, for example, the joker plays as a **2**. This can cause some interesting effects for high-low split games. Let's say that Alice has **6-5-4-3-2** (called a "straight six")--a reasonably good hand for both high and low. Burt has **Joker-6-5-4-3**. By applying the rule for wild cards in straights, Burt's joker plays as a **7** for high, giving him a seven-high straight to defeat Alice's six-high straight. For low, the joker plays as an ace--the lowest card not in Burt's hand--and his hand also defeats Alice for low, because his low hand is **6-5-4-3-A**, lower than her straight six by one notch. Jokers are very powerful in high-low split games.

Ace-to-six low

Ace-to-six low is a method for evaluating [low hands](#) in [poker](#). It is not as commonly used as the [ace-to-five low](#) method, but it is common among home games in the eastern United States, and also common in the United Kingdom (it is the traditional ranking of London lowball, a [stud poker](#) variant).

As in all [lowball](#) games, pairs and trips are bad: that is, any hand with no pair defeats any hand with a pair; one pair hands defeat two pair or trips, etc. No-pair hands are compared starting with the highest ranking card, just as in high poker, except that the [high hand](#) loses. In ace-to-six low, [straights](#) and [flushes](#) count for high (and are therefore bad), and aces play as the lowest card.

For example, the hand **8-5-4-3-2** defeats **9-7-6-4-3**, because eight-high is lower than nine-high. The hand **7-6-5-4-2** defeats both, because seven-high is lower still. The hand **7-6-5-4-3** would lose, because it is a straight. Aces are low, so **8-5-4-3-A** defeats **8-5-4-3-2**. Also, **A-A-9-5-3** (a pair of aces) defeats **2-2-5-4-3** (a pair of deuces), but both of those would lose to any no-pair hand such as **K-J-8-6-4**. In the rare event that hands with pairs tie, kickers are used just as in high poker (but reversed): **3-3-6-4-2** defeats **3-3-6-5-A**.

It is called ace-to-six low because the best possible hand is **6-4-3-2-A**, followed by **6-5-3-2-A**, **6-5-4-2-A**, **6-5-4-3-A**, **7-4-3-2-A**, **7-5-3-2-A**, etc.

When speaking, low hands are referred to by their highest ranking card or cards. Any nine-high hand can be called "a nine", and is defeated by any "eight". Two cards are frequently used: the hand **8-6-5-4-2** can be called "an eight-six" and will defeat "an eight-seven" such as **8-7-5-4-A**.

A [wild card](#) plays as whatever rank would make the lowest hand. Thus, in **6-5-Joker-2-A**, the joker plays as a **3**, while in **Joker-5-4-3-2** it would play as a **7** (an ace or six would make a straight).

[High-low split](#) games with ace-to-six low are usually played with a [declaration](#).

Deuce-to-seven low

Deuce-to-seven low is a method for evaluating [low hands](#) in [poker](#). It is often called "Kansas City" low or just "low poker". It is almost the direct opposite of standard poker: [high hand](#) loses. It is not as commonly used as the [ace-to-five low](#) method.

As in all [lowball](#) games, pairs and trips are bad: that is, any hand with no pair defeats any hand with a pair; one pair hands defeat two pair or trips, etc. No-pair hands are compared starting with the highest ranking card, just as in high poker, except that the high hand loses. In deuce-to-seven low, [straights](#) and [flushes](#) count for high (and are therefore bad). Aces are always high (and therefore bad).

For example, the hand **8-5-4-3-2** defeats **9-7-6-4-3**, because eight-high is lower than nine-high. The hand **7-6-5-4-2** defeats both, because seven-high is lower still. The hand **7-6-5-4-3** would lose, because it is a straight. Aces are high, so **Q-8-5-4-3** defeats **A-8-5-4-3**. In the rare event that hands with pairs tie, kickers are used just as in high poker (but reversed): **3-3-6-4-2** defeats **3-3-6-5-2**.

A special rule is that a [wheel](#) is not considered a straight: **A-5-4-3-2** is simply ace-high no pair (it would therefore lose to any king-high, but would defeat **A-6-4-3-2**).

It's called deuce-to-seven low because the best possible hand is **7-5-4-3-2**, followed by **7-6-4-3-2**, **7-6-5-3-2**, **7-6-5-4-2**, **8-5-4-3-2**, **8-6-4-3-2**, etc.

When speaking, low hands are referred to by their highest ranking card or cards. Any nine-high hand can be called "a nine", and is defeated by any "eight". Two cards are frequently used: the hand **8-6-5-4-2** can be called "an eight-six" and will defeat "an eight-seven" such as **8-7-5-4-2**.

Another common notation is calling a particular low hand "smooth" or "rough." A smooth low hand is one where the remaining cards after the highest card are themselves very low; a rough low hand is one where the remaining cards are high. For instance, **8-7-6-4-2** would be referred to as a "rough eight," but **8-5-4-3-2** would be referred to as a "smooth eight."

[Wild cards](#) are rarely used in deuce-to-seven games, but if used they play as whatever rank would make the lowest hand. Thus, in **7-6-Joker-3-2**, the joker plays as a **4**, while in **Joker-5-4-3-2** it would play as a **7** (a six would make a straight, and an ace would make ace-five high).

[High-low split](#) games with deuce-to-seven low are usually played with a [declaration](#).

High hands

The [poker](#) term **high hand** means simply the best [poker hand](#), using traditional poker hand rankings. It is a retronym coined in response to [lowball](#). The term is used most commonly in [High-low split](#) games.

Dominating hand

In [poker](#), a **dominating hand** is one with an overwhelming statistical advantage over another specific hand. For example, in [Seven-card stud](#), while a [Starting hand](#) of **KS KH QD** has the lead over **AD KD 10H**, the latter has many [outs](#) (ways to improve) to beat the former (catching an ace, the straight, the flush, etc.), making it a roughly even contest. However, the first hand dominates in a contest with a hand like **QH QS JC**, because this hand has no ways to improve that the first one doesn't also have (two pair, trips, straight), and the first hand has some of the second hand's outs as well (unseen cards include two kings, but only one queen), giving it a significant advantage.

This concept is most important in [no limit](#) play, where it is possible to bet all your money early in the hand. One must judge not only whether your opponent's hand might be better than yours, but whether or not it might dominate yours to such a degree that long-run fluctuations of luck will amplify the consequences of a mistaken play rather than mitigating them.

One of the things that makes no limit [Texas hold 'em](#) strategically rich and interesting is the unusual relationship of advantage and dominance among various [Starting hands](#). For example, the hand **AC KD** is a slight favorite over **JS 10S**; this hand is a slight favorite over **4S 4C**; and in a non-transitive relationship, the fours are a small favorite over **AC KD**. None of these hands

dominates any other, but **AC KD** does dominate **AH QD**, **4S 4C** is dominated by **7S 7H**, and **JS 10S** is dominated by **QC 10C**.

Nut hand

In [poker](#), the **nut hand**, or just the **nuts**, is the strongest hand possible in any particular situation. The term applies mostly to [community card poker](#) games to mean the individual holding that makes the strongest hand possible with the given board of community cards. By extension, the term is used more loosely to refer to any very strong hand.

For example in [Texas hold 'em](#), if the board is **5S 6S AC 9S 5H**, a player holding **7S 8S** has the nuts (a 9-high straight flush in spades), and cannot lose. Sometimes it is useful to know that your hand is the second or third best possible. On this same board, the hand **5C 5D** would be the second-nut hand, four fives; and the third-nut hand would be any pair of the remaining three aces, making a full house **A-A-A-5-5**.

In [high-low split](#) games one often speaks of "nut low" and "nut high" hands separately. With an [Omaha](#) board identical to the one above, any hand with **2-3** makes the nut low **6-5-3-2-A**, while **2-4** is the second-nut low (the nut high hands remain the same).

Finally, one also hears terms such as "nut flush" or "nut full house" to mean the highest hand possible in that particular category in the circumstances, even though that may not be strictly the nut hand. For example, a pair of aces with the above board could be called the "nut full house", even though there are two higher (but very unlikely) hands possible.

The phrase originates from the historical poker games in the colonial west of America. If one bet to the sum of everything he possessed, he would place the "nuts" of his wagon wheels on the table. Obviously, to make such a bet one would need to be sure that he has the best possible hand.

There is also a possibility of having a nut losing hand, (a hand that will lose to anything) This occurs where the board has four of a kind and a deuce. In this situation, if you hold pocket 2's, there is no possibility of this hand winning a showdown with any other hand, as any opponent will have a better kicker than you.

Drawing hand

In [Poker](#), a **drawing hand** is a hand that is not yet "complete"; that is, one which does not yet rank highly, but which may do later, depending on what cards a player receives. This contrasts with a "made hand" - a hand which is already somewhat strong.

An illustrative example from [Texas Hold 'em](#): if Alice holds **AC KC**, Bob holds **6D 7D**, and the flop comes **5S 8S KH**, then Alice has a fairly strong "made hand" (a pair of Kings, with an Ace kicker), while Bob has a drawing hand: an open-ended straight draw. If allowed to see the final two community cards, Bob can expect to catch a **4** or a **9** (thus completing his [straight](#) and winning) about a third of the time.

Whether to continue with a drawing hand is usually a function of [pot odds](#) and implied odds. Typically, if a player with a strong "made hand" suspects another player of being "on a draw", the player with the made hand will make a strong bet, so that it is mathematically incorrect for the other player to "chase".

Made hand

In [poker](#), a **made hand** is one that does not need improvement to win, in contrast to a [drawing hand](#). For example in [Draw poker](#), if you have two pair, and your opponent is drawing for a straight or flush, you are said to have a made hand because even though you will be drawing a card just as he will, you can win even if you don't draw a card that improves your hand, while he cannot win unless he improves.

Non-standard Poker Hands

Non-standard poker hands are hands which are not recognized by official [poker](#) rules but are created by house rules. Nonstandard hands usually appear in games of [five card draw poker](#). Other terms for nonstandard hands are **special hands** or **freak hands**. Because the hands are defined by house rules, the composition and ranking of these hands is subject to variation. Any player participating in a game with nonstandard hands should be sure to determine the exact rules of the game before play begins.

The usual hierarchy of poker hands from lowest to highest runs as follows (standard poker hands are in *italics*):

- *High card*
- *Pair*
- **Bobtail straight** - Also called **four straight**. Four cards in consecutive order.
- **Flush house** - Three cards of one suit and two cards of another.
- **Bobtail flush** - Also called **four flush**. Four cards of the same suit. It is most commonly played in [stud poker](#).
- **Russ** - Five cards of the same color. Usually played in 5 card stud.
- *Two pair*
- **Blaze** - Also called **blazer**. All cards are jacks, queens, or kings.
- **Flash** - One card of each suit plus a joker.
- **Little bobtail** - A three card straight flush (three cards of the same suit in consecutive order).
- *Three of a kind*
- **Skeet** - Also called **pelter** or **bracket**. A hand with a deuce; a three or a four; a five; a six, a seven, or an eight; and a nine.
- **Five and dime** - All cards are fives, sixes, sevens, eights, nines, or tens with no pair.
- **Skip straight** - Also called **alternate straight**, **Dutch straight**, or **skipper**. Cards are in consecutive order, skipping every other card. (Example 3-5-7-9-J).
- **Wrap-around straight** - Also called **round-the-corner straight**. Consecutive cards including an ace which counts as both the high and low card. (Example Q-K-A-2-3).
- **Wheel** - The sequence 5-4-3-2-A. This could technically be considered a round-the-corner straight, but is frequently played even if other round-the-corner straights are not allowed, particularly in [pai gow poker](#). When wheels are recognized as distinct from round-the-corner straights, they are ranked as

straights: in most games they are considered five-high, and thus the lowest possible straights, but in pai gow poker they rank between king-high and ace-high straights.

- *Straight*
- **Little dog** - See below.
- **Big dog** - See below.
- **Little cat** - See below.
- **Big cat** - See below.
- *Flush*
- *Full house*
- **Big bobtail** - A four card straight flush (four cards of the same suit in consecutive order).
- *Four of a kind*
- *Straight flush* - Note that the highest, A-K-Q-J-10 suited, is also called *royal flush*.
- **Skeet flush** - The same cards as a skeet and all in the same suit.
- *Five of a kind* - Five cards of the same rank, only possible using variant rules such as wild cards.

Cats and dogs

"Cats" (or "tigers") and "dogs" are types of no-pair hands defined by their highest and lowest cards. The remaining three cards are **kickers**. Dogs and cats rank above straights and below flushes. Usually, when cats and dogs are played, they are the only unconventional hands allowed.

- **Little dog** - Seven high, two low (for example, 7-6-4-3-2). It ranks just above a *straight*, and below a flush or any other cat or dog.
- **Big dog** - Ace high, nine low (for example, A-K-J-10-9). Ranks above a straight or little dog, and below a flush or cat.
- **Little cat** (or **little tiger**) - Eight high, three low. Ranks above a straight or any dog, but below a flush or big cat.
- **Big cat** (or **big tiger**) - King high, eight low. It ranks just below a flush, and above a straight or any other cat or dog.

Some play that dog or cat flushes beat a straight flush, under the reasoning that a plain dog or cat beats a plain straight. This makes the big cat flush the **highest hand** in the game.

Kilters

A **Kilter**, also called **Kelter**, is a generic term for a number of different nonstandard hands. Depending on house rules, a Kilter may be a Skeet, a Little Cat, a Skip Straight, or some variation of one of these hands.

Defined hands

[No pair](#) | [One pair](#) | [Two pairs](#) | [Three of a kind](#) | [Straight](#) | [Flush](#) | [Full house](#) | [Four of a kind](#) | [Straight flush](#) | [Five of a kind](#)

No pair

A **no pair hand** is a [poker hand](#) such as **KH JC 8C 7D 3S**, in which no two cards have the same rank, the five cards are not in sequence, and the five cards are not all the same suit. It is sometimes simply referred to as "**high card**", as its highest value card determines its rank compared with other no pair hands. It is also known as "nothing" or "garbage," and many other derogatory terms. It ranks below all other poker hands. There are 1,302,540 possible no pair hands, so the odds of getting no pair given a five card hand are 7879:4861, or about 1.62:1 (that is, slightly more than 50%).

Two such hands are ranked by comparing the highest ranking card; if those are equal, then the next highest ranking card; if those are equal, then the third highest ranking card, etc.

No-pair hands are often described by the one or two highest cards in the hand, such as "king high" or "ace-queen high", or by as many cards as are necessary to break a tie.

Examples:

- **AD 10D 9S 5C 4C** ("ace high") defeats **KC QD JC 8H 7H** ("king high")
- **AC QC 7D 5H 2C** ("ace-queen") defeats **AD 10D 9S 5C 4C** ("ace-ten")
- **7S 6C 5C 4D 2H** ("seven-six-five-four") defeats **7C 6D 5D 3H 2C** ("seven-six-five-three")

One pair

One pair is a [poker hand](#) such as **4H 4S KS 10D 5S**, which contains two cards of the same rank, plus three unmatched cards. It ranks above any [no pair](#) hand, but below all other poker hands. There are 1,098,240 possible one pair hands, so the odds of getting one pair given a five card hand are 481:352 or approximately 1.37:1.

Between two such hands, the hand with the higher ranking pair wins. If two hands have the same rank of pair, the third card in each hand (called the [kicker](#) or [side card](#)) is compared in the manner as no-pair hands.

Examples:

- **10C 10S 6S 4H 2H** ("pair of tens") defeats **9H 9C AH QD 10D** ("pair of nines")
- **10H 10D JD 3H 2C** ("tens with jack kicker") defeats **10C 10S 6S 4H 2H**
- **2D 2H 8S 5C 4C** ("pair of deuces, eight-five-four") pushes against **2C 2S 8C 5H 3H** ("deuces, eight-five-three")

In some games, the kicker becomes very important (typically [community card](#) games like [Texas hold 'em](#)), while in other games (such as [draw poker](#)) it is almost never significant. Nonetheless, it is always used if needed.

Two pairs

A poker hand such as **JH JC 4C 4S 9S**, which contains two cards of the same rank, plus two cards of another rank (that match each other but not the first pair), plus one unmatched card, is called **two pair**. It ranks above **one pair** and below **three of a kind**. There are 123,552 possible two pair hands, so the odds of getting two pair given a five card hand are 3967:198 or approximately 20:1.

Between two such hands, the higher ranking pair of each is first compared, and the higher pair wins. If both have the same **top pair**, then the second pair of each is compared. Finally, if both hands have the same two pairs, the **kicker** determines the winner.

These hands are referred to in speech, for example, as "jacks and fours" or "jacks over fours" or just "jacks on the roof" or "jacks up" (the latter is common in games where the smaller pair is rarely needed to break ties, so it doesn't need to be mentioned most of the time). Two small pairs with ranks between **2** and **9** are also sometimes referred to by the two-digit number they make: sevens and fives, for example, might be called a "seventy-five".

Examples:

- **KH KD 2C 2D JH** ("kings up") defeats **JD JS 10S 10C 9S** ("jacks up")
- **9C 9D 7D 7S 6H** ("nines and sevens") defeats **9H 9S 5H 5D KC** ("nines and fives" or "ninety-five")
- **4S 4C 3S 3H KD** ("fours and threes, king kicker") defeats **4H 4D 3D 3C 10S** ("fours and threes with a ten")

Note in particular here that the general rule about poker hands having only five cards often comes into play. If you are playing a seven-card game and have, for example, **10C 10D 8D 8H 4C 4S QD**, the highest poker hand you can make is two pair: **10C 10D 8D 8H QD**. The extra **4C 4S** are of no consequence because you can't squeeze them into a five-card hand.

[Dead man's hand](#)

Dead man's hand

In poker, the **dead man's hand** is a **two-pair hand**, namely "aces over eights." The origin of the name is the **five-card-draw** hand held by Wild Bill Hickok at the time of his murder, which is accepted to have included the aces and eights of both of the black suits (sometimes considered "bullets").

(In five-card games, this category of hands can be succinctly defined as two aces, two eights, and one card of any remaining rank, regardless of suit. In seven-card games, a strict specification of aces over eights is more complicated: in permitting the existence of two pairs, a five-card hand as described also rules out any higher value. Among seven-card hands, as a contrasting example, any with two aces, two eights, and three cards with one other rank in common always provides both two pair and a **full house**, so a competent player would always set aside the eights and declare the full house; most players would probably thus not consider it a dead man's hand, any more than they would so consider a *full house* with aces and eights.)

There are various claims as to the identity of Hickok's fifth card, and there is also some reason to believe that he had discarded one card, the **draw** was interrupted by the shooting, and he never got the fifth card due to him.

For other poker hands that have found a place in lore, see [List of slang names for poker hands](#).

Three of a kind

Three of a kind is a [poker hand](#) such as **2D 2S 2H KS 6S**, which contains three cards of the same rank, plus two unmatched cards. Also called "trips" or "a set." It ranks above [two pair](#) and below a [straight](#). There are 54,912 possible three of a kind hands, so the [odds](#) of getting trips given five cards are 4077:88 or approximately 46:1.

Between two such hands, the hand with the higher ranking matched set wins. If both have the same matched set (this is possible only in games with [wild cards](#) or [community cards](#)), then the [kickers](#) are compared to break the tie.

Examples:

- **8S 8H 8D 5S 3C** ("three eights" or "trip eights") defeats **5C 5H 5D QD 10C** ("three fives")
- **8S 8H 8D AC 2D** ("three eights, ace kicker") defeats **8S 8H 8D 5S 3C** ("three eights, five, three")

In [Texas hold 'em](#), a *set* usually refers to a three of a kind in which two of the cards are in the player's hand and the third is on the board, whereas *trips* more often refers to one card in the player's hand and two on the board. *Three of a kind* suggests neither. The terms may all be used interchangeably, however.

Straight

A **straight** is a [poker hand](#) such as **QC JS 10S 9H 8H**, which contains five cards of sequential rank, of varying suits. It ranks above [three of a kind](#) and below a [flush](#). There are 10,200 possible straights, so the [odds](#) of getting a straight given a five card hand are 32359:128, or approximately 253:1.

Two straights are ranked by comparing the high card of each. Two straights with the same high card are of equal value, and split any winnings (straights are the most commonly tied hands in poker, especially in [community card poker](#) games).

Straights are often described by the highest card, as in "queen-high straight" or "straight to the queen".

Examples

- **8S 7S 6H 5H 4S** ("eight-high straight") defeats **6D 5S 4D 3H 2C** ("six-high straight")
- **8S 7S 6H 5H 4S** ties **8H 7D 6C 5C 4H**

Aces are a special case here: a hand such as **AC KC QD JS 10S** is an ace-high straight (or "broadway"), and ranks above a king-high straight such as **KH QS JH 10H 9D**. But the ace may also be played as a 1-spot in a hand such as **5S 4D 3D 2S AC**, called a [wheel](#), [bicycle](#), or five-

high straight, which ranks below the six-high straight **6S 5C 4C 3H 2H**. The ace may not "wrap around", or play both high and low in the same hand: **3C 2D AS KS QC** is not a straight, but just ace-high no pair. The wrap-around is, however, one of the unconventional hands used in some home games.

When [wild cards](#) are used, the wild card becomes whichever rank is necessary to complete the straight. If two different ranks would complete a straight, it becomes the higher. For example, in the hand **JD 10S 9C (Wild) 7S**, the wild card plays as an **8** (of any suit; it doesn't matter). In the hand **(Wild) 6H 5D 4H 3D**, it plays as a **7** (even though a **2** would also make a straight).

The general rule about poker hands having only five cards may come into play here. If playing a seven-card game you end up with **KS KC KH QS JD 10D 9C**, and your opponent has **KD QD JH 10H 9S 8S 7C**, your hands are tied. The best five-card poker hand you can make is a king-high straight, and the best hand he can make is also a king-high straight. The fact that you also have three kings and he also has a seven-card-long straight are both irrelevant. Of course, if his hand were instead **AH KD QD JH 10H 9S 8S**, his ace-high straight would defeat your king-high.

In Mexican stud, because the **8s**, **9s**, and **10s** are removed from the deck, a hand such as **6-7-J-Q-K** counts as a straight (to the king).

[Wheel](#)

Wheel

A **wheel** or **bicycle** is the [poker hand](#) **5-4-3-2-A**, regardless of suit, which is a five-high **straight**, the lowest-ranking of the straights.

In [ace-to-five low](#) poker, where aces are allowed to play as low and straights and [flushes](#) do not count against a hand's "low" status, this is the best possible hand. In high/low split games, it is both the best possible low hand and a competitive high hand.

The origin of the name "Wheel" probably derives from the Bicycle playing cards issued by the [U.S. Playing Card Company](#).

Flush

A **flush** is a [poker hand](#) such as **QC 10C 7C 6C 4C**, which contains five cards of the same suit, not in rank sequence. It ranks above a [straight](#) and below a [full house](#). We first pick one of four suits and then 5 cards from that suit. In other words, $C(4,1) \times C(13,5) = 5148$. We then subtract the 4 possible Royal Flushes and the 36 possible Straight Flushes. Therefore, we have 5108 possible flushes, so the [odds](#) of getting a flush given a five card hand are 16627:33, or approximately 504:1.

Usually two flushes are compared as if they were [No pair](#) hands. In other words, the highest ranking card of each is compared to determine the winner; if both have the same high card, then the second-highest ranking card is compared, etc. The suits have no value: two flushes with the same five ranks of cards are tied.

Examples:

- **AH QH 10H 5H 3H** ("ace-high flush") defeats **KS QS JS 9S 6S** ("king-high flush")
- **AD KD 7D 6D 2D** ("flush, ace-king high") defeats **AH QH 10H 5H 3H** ("flush, ace-queen high")
- **QH 10H 9H 5H 2H** ("heart flush") ties **QS 10S 9S 5S 2S** ("spade flush")

In [community card poker](#), this *top-down* tie-breaking can lead to unanticipated kicker-screw. For example, in [Texas Hold 'em](#), a player with two low hole spades, when three out of four table cards are spades, may bet aggressively knowing she has the flush. If a fourth spade comes on the river, this player's hand is degraded from powerful to effectively useless.

When [Wild cards](#) are used, a wild card contained in a flush is considered to be of the highest rank not already present in the hand. For example, in the hand **(Wild) 10H 8H 5H 4H**, the wild card plays as the **AH**, but in the hand **AC KC (Wild) 9C 6C**, it plays as the **QC**.

Some home games and some [casinos](#) play the [double-ace flush](#) rule, in which a wild card in a flush always plays as an ace, even if one is already present. In such a game, the hand **AS (Wild) 9S 5S 2S** would defeat **AD KD QD 10D 8D** (the wild card playing as an imaginary second AS), whereas by the standard rules it would lose (because even with the wild card playing as a **KS**, the latter hand's **QD** outranks the former's **9S**). This rule is rare, and is an exception to standard practice, so it should be announced clearly if you intend to use it.

Some poker games are played with a deck that has been [stripped](#) of certain cards, usually low-ranking ones. For example, the Australian game of Manila uses a 32-card deck in which all cards below the rank of **7** are removed, and Mexican stud removes the **8s, 9s, and 10s**. In both of these games, a flush ranks above a full house, because having fewer cards of each suit available makes flushes rarer.

[Double-ace flush](#) | [Royal flush](#)

Double-ace flush

Some home [poker](#) games and some [casinos](#) play the [double-ace flush](#) rule, in which a [wild card](#) in a [flush](#) always plays as an ace, even if one is already present. In such a game, the hand A-Wild-9-5-2 (of one suit) would play as if it were A-A-9-5-2, defeating A-K-Q-10-8 (of one suit), whereas by the standard rules it would play as A-K-9-5-2 and therefore lose (the opposing hand's queen outranks the first's nine). This rule is rare, and is an exception to standard practice, so it should be announced clearly if you intend to use it.

Royal flush

A **royal flush** is a [poker hand](#) containing an ace, king, queen, jack, and a 10 of the same suit (for example **AS KS QS JS 10S**). Because it is both a [straight](#) (having five cards in sequential rank) and a [flush](#) (having five cards of the same suit), it is also known as an [ace-high straight flush](#) or [Super Flush](#).

A royal flush is not actually a separate type of hand in poker. It is ranked as a straight flush, but since it has an ace as the highest card, it is the highest ranking straight flush, and therefore the highest ranking hand in poker (sans wild cards).

The probability that a random five card hand is a royal flush is 1 in 649,740.

Full house

A **full house** is a poker hand such as **3C 3S 3D 6C 6H**, which contains three matching cards of one rank, plus two matching cards of another rank. It is also called a "full boat", "boat" or "tight" or occasionally a "Danny Tanner", in reference to the sitcom titled Full House. It ranks above a **flush** and below **four of a kind**. There are 3,744 full house hands, so the odds are approximately 694:1 given a five card hand.

Between two full houses, the one with the higher ranking set of trips wins. If two have the same set of trips (possible in **wild card** and **community card** games), the hand with the higher pair wins.

Examples:

- **10S 10H 10D 4S 4D** ("tens full") defeats **9H 9C 9S AH AC** ("nines full")
- **KS KC KH 3D 3S** defeats **10S 10H 10D 4S 4D**
- **QH QD QC 8H 8C** ("queens full of eights" or "full house, queens over eights") defeats **QH QD QC 5S 5H** ("queens full of fives")

Some poker games are played with a deck that has been **stripped** of certain cards, usually low-ranking ones. For example, the Australian game of Manila uses a 32-card deck in which all cards below the rank of **7** are removed, and Mexican stud removes the **8s**, **9s**, and **10s**. In both of these games, a flush ranks above a full house, because having fewer cards of each suit available makes full houses more common.

Four of a kind

Four of a kind is a poker hand such as **9C 9S 9D 9H JH**, which contains four cards of one rank, and an unmatched card. It is also called "quads". It ranks above a **full house** and below a **straight flush**. There are 624 possible four of a kind hands, so the odds on quads given a five card hand are 4164:1.

Higher ranking quads defeat lower ranking ones. Between two equal sets of quads (possible in **wild card** and **community card** games), the **kicker** determines the winner.

Examples:

- **10C 10D 10H 10S 5D** ("four tens" or "quad tens") defeats **6D 6H 6S 6C KS** ("four sixes")
- **10C 10D 10H 10S QC** ("four tens, queen kicker") defeats **10C 10D 10H 10S 5D** ("four tens with a five")

Straight flush

A **straight flush** is a [poker hand](#) such as **QS JS 10S 9S 8S**, which contains five cards in sequence, all of the same suit. It ranks above all other poker hands (unless [wild cards](#) are used, in which case it ranks below five of a kind). There are 40 straight flushes, so the odds on a straight flush given a five card hand are 64973:1.

Two such hands are compared by their high card in the same way as are [straights](#), and the same [wild card](#) rules apply as for straights. The ace rule also applies: **5D 4D 3D 2D AD** is a 5-high straight flush (sometimes called a "steel wheel"). An ace-high straight flush such as **AC KC QC JC 10C** is called a [royal flush](#), and is the highest ranking poker hand possible without wild cards.

Examples:

- **7H 6H 5H 4H 3H** beats **5S 4S 3S 2S AS**
- **JC 10C 9C 8C 7C** ties **JD 10D 9D 8D 7D**

Five of a kind

Five of a kind is a [poker hand](#) such as **AS AC AH AD (Wild)**, which contains five cards of the same rank (only possible in [wild card](#) games in which wild cards may be cards that already exist in the hand). It ranks above all other poker hands.

Higher ranking sets of five defeat lower ranking sets. Since the general rule is that poker hands only have five cards come into play, there are no [kickers](#) to further break any ties.

Examples:

- **QS QC QH QD (Wild)** (five Queens) defeats **7S 7C 7H 7D (Wild)** (five sevens)

Kicker

A **kicker**, also called a **side card**, is a card in a [poker hand](#) that does not itself take part in determining the rank of the hand, but that may be used to break ties between hands of the same rank. For example, the hand **Q-Q-10-5-2** is ranked as a [pair](#) of queens. The **10**, **5**, and **2** are kickers. This hand would defeat any hand with [no pair](#), or with a lower-ranking pair, and lose to any higher-ranking hand. But the kickers can be used to break ties between other hands that also have a pair of queens. For example, **Q-Q-K-3-2** would win (because its **K** kicker outranks the **10**), but **Q-Q-10-4-3** would lose (because its **4** is outranked by the **5**).

The term is also used in [draw poker](#) to denote an unmatched card (often an ace) retained by a player during the draw in the hope that either it will be paired on the draw, or else play as a kicker (in the first sense) on the [showdown](#). A kicker may also be retained in order to deceive an opponent, for example, to represent a three-of-a-kind when the player has only a pair.

Kickers take on special importance in [Texas hold 'em](#), because a common winning hand is one card in a player's hand matched with a card on the board, while the player's second card acts as a kicker. For example, if one player holds **A-Q**, a second player holds **A-10**, and the board is **A-J-8-5-3**, the player with the **Q** kicker wins because **A-A-Q-J-8** defeats **A-A-J-10-8**. If the board, however, were **A-K-5-9-5**, the players would tie, because both would play the hand **A-A-**

5-5-K; in this case it is said that the players' kickers "don't play", or that the "kicker on the board plays". In this case, there would be a split pot.

Betting

The game of [poker](#) as played today requires that players agree before play on allowable amounts for betting (called **limits**), and the use and amount of **forced bets**. These are collectively called the **betting structure** of the game.

The betting structure of a poker game is a more significant factor in its balance of luck and skill than the game variant being played. Higher forced bets and smaller limits increase the influence of chance. Smaller forced bets and larger limits increase the element of skill. Good games are carefully balanced so that skillful players will win in the long run while recreational players can win often enough for the game to be exciting to them.

The reason that higher forced bets with smaller limits increases the luck factor is simple enough. With a lot of money in the pot due to the antes, the small forced bet is getting high odds - it is, therefore, worthwhile calling with any hand.

For example, in [Texas Hold 'em](#), suppose the antes are \$10 per player, and the blinds are at \$5 and \$10. With nine players the pot is \$105 before the first player to act has to decide whether or not to call the \$10 big blind. That first player is getting odds of 10.5 to 1 on a call - this makes any hand worth playing.

Consequently, various skills such as hand selection and reading player's hands are reduced in value and the game becomes a dice-shoot.

Terminology

Open

The act of making the first non-zero bet in a betting round is called **opening** the round. On the first betting round, it is also called **opening the pot**. Some games may have special rules about opening a round that may not apply to other bets. For example, they may have a betting structure that specifies different allowable amounts for opening than for other bets, or they may require a player to hold certain cards to open.

Call

To **call** is to make the total amount of one's bet equal to the amount of the immediately preceding bet (which will be the largest bet made in that round). All players must eventually call an equal amount for the betting round to end, or else one player must bet an amount that no one calls, thus ending the entire deal and awarding him the pot.

The second and subsequent calls of a particular bet amount are sometimes called **overcalls**.

A player calling a raise before he or she has invested money in the pot in that round is **cold calling**. For example, if in a betting round, Jerry bets, Sally raises, and Eric calls, Eric "calls two bets cold".

A player calling instead of raising with a strong hand is **smooth calling**, a form of slowplay. Smooth calling is generally done in early betting rounds and against only one or two opponents; otherwise at least one opponent may have too good a chance of drawing out on the smooth caller and the trap backfires.

In public card rooms and **casinos** where verbal declarations are binding, the word "call" is such a declaration. In particular, the practice commonly seen in poker games on television and in movies of saying "I call, and raise \$100" is considered a **string raise** and is not allowed in a serious poker game. Saying "I call" commits you to the action of calling, and only calling.

Check

When no one has yet opened the betting round, one may **check**, which is equivalent to calling the current bet of zero. The player declines making a bet; indicating that he does not choose to open, but that he wishes to keep his cards and retain the right to call or raise later in the same round if some other player opens. A common way to signify checking is to tap the table with a fist or an open hand.

A player with a **live blind** who chooses not to take advantage of his right to raise is said to **check his option**, which can be signified the same way.

Raise

To **raise** is to make the amount of one's bet greater than the amount of the immediately preceding bet, forcing all subsequent players to call the new amount. If the current bet amount is nothing, this action is considered the opening bet. A player making the second (not counting the open) or subsequent raise of a betting round is often said to **reraise**.

Except in the case of a *live blind*, a player may not raise the current bet amount if he is the one who first set it. If it is that player's turn to act who first set the current amount, the betting round is **closed** and no further betting may take place in this round. This occurs when all other players have either called the amount or folded. All remaining players will have bet an equal total amount (except for some rare cases covered by table stakes rules).

A universal rule in **casinos** in the United States, and common in home games as well, is that any raise must at least equal the amount of the previous raise. For example, if a player in a *spread limit* or *no limit* game bets \$5, the next player may raise by another \$5 or more, but he may not raise by only \$2, even if that would otherwise conform to the game's betting structure. The primary purpose of this rule is to avoid game delays caused by "nuisance" raises (small raises of large bets that do not affect the bet amount much but that take time). This rule is often overridden by table stakes rules, so that a player may in fact raise a \$5 bet by \$2 if that \$2 is his entire remaining stake.

In many **casinos**, for fixed-limit or spread-limit games, there is a limit to the total number of raises allowed in a single betting round (typically three or four, not including the opening bet of a round). For example in a casino with a three-raise rule, if one player opens the betting for \$5, the next raises by \$5 making it \$10, a third player raises another \$5, and a fourth player raises \$5 again making the current bet \$20, the betting is said to be **capped** at that point, and no further raises beyond the \$20 level will be allowed on that round. It is common to suspend this rule

when there are only two players betting in the round (called being **heads-up**). Pot-limit and no-limit games do not have a limit on the number of raises.

Fold

Although not specifically a betting action, to **fold** is to discard one's hand and forfeit any further interest in the hand or the current pot. Also called "drop" or "pass" (the latter term is ambiguous, because it can also mean check). This can be done verbally, or simply signalled by discarding one's hand into the pile of other discards called the **muck**. In [stud poker](#) played in the United States, it is customary to signal folding by turning all of your cards face down. In [casinos](#) in the United Kingdom, a player folds by giving his hand as is to the "house" dealer, who will spread the hand's upcards for the other players to see before mucking them.

It is a serious breach of etiquette to fold **out of turn**, that is, when it is not the folding player's turn to act, because this can harm other players. For example, if there are three players remaining and the first player in turn bets, the third player folding out of turn now would give valuable strategic information to the second player (who is **in turn** at this point), to the detriment of the bettor. In some games, even folding in turn when you are entitled to check (because there is no bet facing you) is considered an out of turn fold since it gives away information to which players would otherwise not be entitled. Finally, if a player folds out of turn in a [stud poker](#) game, the player in turn may demand that his upcards remain exposed until he has completed his turn.

Forced bets

Ante

An ante is a forced bet in which each player places an equal amount of money or chips into the pot before the deal begins. In home games, the amount of the ante is typically small. In games where the acting dealer changes each turn, it is not uncommon for the players to agree that the dealer provides the ante for each player. This simplifies betting, but causes minor inequities if other players come and go or miss their turn to deal.

After the ante, later betting always begins with the player immediately to the dealer's left.

Blinds

A **blind** or **blind bet** is a forced bet placed into the pot by one or more players before the deal begins, in a way that simulates bets made during play. This is used frequently in [casino](#) and tournament games and is designed to ensure there is betting action on each hand. The most common use of blinds as a betting structure calls for two blinds: the player after the dealer blinds about half of what would be a normal bet, and the next player blinds what would be a whole bet. Sometimes only one blind is used, and sometimes three. In the case of three blinds (usually one quarter, one quarter, and half a normal bet amount), the first blind goes "on the button", that is, is paid by the dealer.

For example, the first player to the dealer's left (who would normally be the first to bet after the cards are dealt) makes a blind bet of \$1, and the next player in turn posts a *big blind* of \$2. After the cards are dealt, play continues with the next player in turn (third from the dealer), who acts just as if the \$1 had been an opening bet and the \$2 had been a raise, so he must either call \$2, reraise, or fold. When the betting returns to the player who blinded \$1, he acts just as if that had been the opening bet; he must equal the bet facing him (toward which he may count his \$1), fold, or reraise.

An additional privilege is given to the player who posted the big blind to compensate for the fact that he is forced to bet. If there have been no raises by the time his first turn to bet voluntarily comes (that is, the bet amount facing him is just the \$2 he originally put in), then he is given the right to raise at that point, even though his right-hand opponent's call would normally have closed the betting round under other circumstances. This "extra" right to raise (called a *live blind*) occurs only once: if his raise is now called by every player, the first betting round closes as usual.

In some *fixed limit* and *spread limit* games, the big blind amount is less than the normal betting minimum. Players acting after a sub-minimum blind have to the right to call the blind as it is, even though it is less than the amount they would be required to bet, or they may raise the amount needed to bring the current bet up to the normal minimum, called **completing** the bet. For example, a game with a \$5 fixed bet on the first round might have blinds of \$1 and \$2. Players acting after the blind may either call the \$2, or raise to \$5. After the bet is raised to \$5, the next raise must be to \$10 in accordance with the normal limits.

Bring-ins

A **bring-in** is a type of forced bet that occurs after the cards are initially dealt, but before any other action. One player, usually chosen by the value of cards dealt face up on the initial deal, is forced to open the betting by some small amount, after which players act after him in normal rotation.

The bring-in is normally assigned on the first betting round of a *stud poker* game to the player whose upcards indicate the poorest hand. For example, in traditional *high hand* stud games and *high-low split* games, the player showing the lowest card pays the bring-in. In *low hand* games, the player with the highest card showing pays the bring-in. The *high card by suit* order can be used to break ties if necessary.

In most *fixed limit* and some *spread limit* games, the bring-in amount is less than the normal betting minimum. The player forced to pay the bring-in may choose either to pay only what is required or to make a normal bet. Players acting after a sub-minimum bring-in have the right to call the bring-in as it is, even though it is less than the amount they would be required to bet, or they may raise the amount needed to bring the current bet up to the normal minimum, called **completing** the bet. For example, a game with a \$5 fixed bet on the first round might have a bring-in of \$2. Players acting after the bring-in can either call the \$2, or raise to \$5. After the bet is raised to \$5, the next raise must be to \$10 in accordance with the normal limits.

In a game where the bring-in is equal to the fixed bet (this is rare and not recommended), the game must either allow the bring-in player to optionally come in for a raise, or else the bring-in

must be treated as **live** in the same way as a *blind*, so that the player is guaranteed his right to raise on the first betting round if he chooses.

Limits

Betting limits apply to the amount a player may open or raise, and come in four common forms: *no limit*, *pot limit* (the two collectively called **big bet poker**), *fixed limit*, and *spread limit*.

All such games have a minimum bet as well as the stated maximums, and also commonly a **betting unit**, which is the smallest denomination in which bets can be made. For example, it is common for games with \$20 and \$40 betting limits to have a minimum betting unit of \$5, so that all bets must be in multiples of \$5, to simplify game play. It is also common for some games to have a bring-in that is less than the minimum for other bets. In this case, players may either call the bring-in, or raise to the full amount of a normal bet, called **completing** the bet.

Outside of the United States, pot limit and no limit games are the most common. Most American home games are played with a spread limit, while casino games are played with spread or fixed limits, though larger casinos may have a high-stakes pot limit or no limit game as well. Fixed limit and spread limit games emphasise the skill of estimating odds, whereas pot limit and no limit games emphasize the skills of game theory and psychology. Almost all poker players believe that pot and no limit poker involve more skill than fixed limit play. A few prominent players, most notably Mason Malmuth, believe that the richer tactics make fixed limit more skilled. Although the main event at the [World Series of Poker](#) is played no limit, most high stakes cash games are fixed limit, so it is unclear which format is the experts' choice.

Fixed limit

In a game played with a **fixed limit** betting structure, a player chooses only whether to bet or not - the amount is fixed by rule. To enable the possibility of bluffing, the fixed amount generally doubles at some point in the game. This double wager amount is referred to as a **big bet**.

For example, a four-round game called "20 and 40 limit" (usually written as \$20/\$40) may specify that each bet in the first two rounds is \$20, and that each **big bet** used in the third and fourth rounds is \$40. This amount applies to each raise, not the total amount bet in a round, so a player may bet \$20, be raised \$20, and then re-raise another \$20, for a total bet of \$60, in such a game.

Four bet maximum

Most fixed limit games are played with a **four bet maximum**. This means that in a given betting round, there can be no more than three raises, meaning that on the betting round, only four bets of the given limit have been made.

Consider this example in a \$20/\$40 game, during a \$20 round with three players that proceeds as follows:

- Player A bets \$20.
- Player B puts in another bet, raises another \$20, making it \$40 to play.
- Player C puts in a third bet, raising another \$20 on that, thus making it \$60 to play.

- Player A puts in the fourth bet (she is usually said to **cap** the betting).

Once Player A has made her final bet, Players B and C may only call another three and two bets (respectively); they may not raise again because the betting is **capped**.

A common exception in this rule practiced in some card rooms is to allow unlimited raising when a pot is played heads up (when only two players remain). Usually, this has occurred because all other players have folded, and only two remain. Many card rooms will permit these two players to re-raise each other until one player is all in.

Some variations do exist for this exception. For example, some card rooms require that the pot became heads up before the third bet has entered the pot on that betting round. It is widely believed that this variation exists to prevent two colluding players from raising a third player out of the pot.

This exception to the four bet maximum has been observed in nearly all card rooms in the USA. It has never been observed in Internet card rooms.

In some card rooms, there is a five bet maximum instead of four.

Kill game

Sometimes a fixed limit game is played as a **kill game**. Such a game is played with an additional blind, called the kill blind. The kill blind can be posted from any position at the table. The amount posted is typically twice the typical blind for that game. For example, in a \$20/\$40 game, the large blind is typically \$20. If this game were played with a full kill, the kill blind would be \$40.

When the kill blind is posted, it changes the stakes of the game. For that hand, the game is played as if the game were a higher limit. In a \$20/\$40 game with a full kill blind posted, the hand is played as if the limit were \$40/\$80. The kill is said to be active when the kill blind is posted and the game is played at the higher limit.

Rules on how the kill is activated vary. On the east coast of the USA, the kill is typically activated by the previous pot being over a particular value. The most typical value is ten times the value of the large bet (in a \$20/\$40 game, the kill would be active if the previous pot won was greater than \$400). The winner of that pot is required to post the kill blind for the next hand.

In the Pacific Northwest of the USA, a kill is typically activated when a particular player wins two pots in a row. After that player wins her second pot, she is required to post a kill blind and the kill is active for the next hand.

Note that a kill need not always be a full kill. For example, it is common to find a game with a half kill. For example, when the kill is active in \$4/\$8 game with a half kill, the game is played at a \$6/\$12 limit.

The term **kill**, when used in this context, should not be confused with killing a hand, which is a term used for a hand that was made a dead hand by action of a game official.

Spread limit

A game played with a **spread limit** betting structure allows a player to raise any amount within a specified range.

For example, a game called "one to five limit" allows each bet to be anywhere from \$1 to \$5 (subject to other betting rules). These limits are typically larger in later rounds of multi-round games. For example, a game might be "one to five, ten on the end", meaning

that early betting rounds allow bets of \$1 to \$5, and the last betting round allows bets of \$1 to \$10.

Pot limit

A game played with a **pot limit** betting structure allows any player to raise up to an amount equal to the size of the whole pot before the raise.

For example, let us assume that there is \$10 in the pot at the start of a betting round.

The first player may open the betting for up to \$10. If he does in fact open for \$10, the next player may raise to \$40 (after calling the \$10 bet, the total amount of the pot is \$30, so he may raise \$30). The third player would be entitled to raise to \$140 (after calling \$40, the pot would contain \$100, thus he may raise \$100). Any player may also raise less than the maximum so long as his raise is equal to or greater than the immediately previous bet or raise.

In pot-limit hold'em and pot-limit Omaha, many structures treat the little blind as if it were the same size of the big blind in computing pot size. In such a structure, a player can open for a maximum of four times the size of the big blind. For example, if the blinds are \$5 and \$10, a player may open with a raise to \$40. (The range of options is to either open with a call of \$10, or raise in increments of five dollars to any amount from \$20 to \$40.) Subsequent players also treat the \$5 as if it were \$10 in computing the pot size, until the big blind is through acting on the first betting round.

No limit

A game played with a **no limit** betting structure allows each player to raise any amount of his stake at any time (subject to the table stakes rules and any other rules about raising).

Table stakes rules

All [casinos](#) and many home games play [poker](#) by what are called **table stakes** rules, which state that each player starts each deal with a certain stake, and plays that deal with that stake. He may not remove money from the table or add money from his pocket during the play of a hand. Nor is a player allowed to hide the amount of his stake from other players; he must disclose the amount when asked. This requires some special rules to handle the case when a player is faced with a bet that he cannot call with his available stake.

"All in"

When a player is faced with a current bet amount that he has insufficient remaining stake to call and he wishes to call (he may of course fold without the need of special rules), he bets the remainder of his stake and declares himself **all in**. He may now hold onto his cards for the remainder of the deal as if he had called every bet, but he may not win any more money from any player above the amount of his bet.

For example, let's assume that the first player in a betting round opens for \$20, and the next player to bet has only \$5 remaining of his stake. He bets the \$5, declaring himself all in, and holds onto his cards. The next player in turn still has the \$20 bet facing him, and if he can cover it he must call \$20 or fold. If he calls \$20, thus ending the betting round, instead of collecting all bets into the central pot as usual, the following procedure is applied: since there is an all in player with only \$5 bet, his \$5, and \$5 from each of the other players, is collected into the central pot (now called the **main pot**), as if the final bet had been only \$5. This main pot (which may include any antes or bets from previous rounds) is the most the all in player is eligible to win. The remaining money from the still-active bettors, in this case \$15 apiece, is collected into a **side pot** that only the players who contributed to it are eligible to win. If there are further betting rounds, all bets are placed into the side pot while the all in player continues to hold his cards but does not participate in further betting. Upon the [showdown](#), the players eligible for the side pot—and only those players—reveal their hands, and the winner among them takes the side pot, regardless of what the all in player holds (indeed, before he even shows). After the side pot is awarded, the all in player then shows his hand, and if it is superior to all others shown, he wins the main pot (otherwise he loses as usual).

There is a strategic advantage to being all in: you cannot be [bluffed](#), because you are entitled to hold your cards and see the showdown without risking any more money. The players who continue to bet after you are all in can still bluff each other out of the side pot, which is also to your advantage since they reduce your competition without risk to you. But these advantages are more than offset by the disadvantage that you cannot win any more money than what your stake can cover. After all, the object of poker is not to win hands—it is to win money.

If a player goes all in with a raise rather than a call, another special rule comes into play. There are two options in common use here: pot limit and no limit games always use what is called the **full bet rule**, while fixed limit or spread limit games use either the full bet rule or the **half bet rule**. The full bet rule states that if the amount of an all in raise does not equal the full amount of the previous raise, it does not constitute a "real" raise, and therefore does not reopen the betting action. The half bet rule states that if an all in raise is equal to or larger than half the bet being raised, it does constitute a raise and reopens the action.

For example, a player opens the betting round for \$20, and the next player has a total stake of \$25. He may raise to \$25, declaring himself all in, but this does not constitute a "real" raise, in the following sense: if a third player now calls the \$25, and the first player's turn to act comes up, he must now call the additional \$5, but he does not have the right to reraise further. The all in player's pseudo-raise was really just a call with some extra money, and the third player's call was just a call, so the initial opener's bet was simply called by both remaining players, closing the betting round (even though he must still equalize the money by putting in the additional \$5). If the half bet rule were being used, and the all in player had raised to \$30 instead of \$25, then that raise would count as a genuine raise and the first player would be entitled to reraise if he chose to (this would create a side pot for the amount of his reraise and the third player's call, if any).

When all players are all-in, or one player is playing only against opponents who are all-in, no more betting can take place. In a tournament, when this occurs, it is required that all players still

playing flip up their hole cards even though the game may not be over yet. Likewise, any other cards that would normally be dealt face down, such as the final card in [seven-card stud](#), are dealt face-up. These rules discourage collusion.

Open stakes

The alternative to table stakes rules is called "open stakes", in which players are allowed to buy more chips during the hand and even to borrow money (often called "going light"). This may be appropriate for home or private games but is never allowed in casinos.

First, a player may go all-in in exactly the same manner as in table stakes if he so chooses, rather than adding to his stake or borrowing. Because it is a strategic advantage to go all-in with some hands while being able to add to your stake with others, such games should strictly enforce a minimum buy-in that is several times the maximum bet (or blinds, in the case of a no-limit or pot-limit game). A player who goes all-in and wins a pot that is less than the minimum buy-in may not then add to his stake or borrow money during any future hand until he rebuys an amount sufficient to bring his stake up to a full buy-in.

A player may instead choose to buy chips with cash out-of-pocket at any time, even during the play of a hand, and his bets are limited only by the specified betting structure of the game.

Finally, a player may also borrow money by betting with an IOU, called a "marker", payable to the winner of the pot. In order to bet with a marker, *all* players still active in the pot must agree to accept the marker. If any player refuses to accept a marker, the bettor may bet with cash out-of-pocket or go all-in. A player may also borrow money from a player not involved in the pot, giving him a personal marker in exchange for cash or chips, which the players in the pot are then compelled to accept. A player may borrow money in order to call a bet during a hand, and later in the same hand go all-in in the face of further betting; but if a player borrows money in order to raise, he forfeits the right to go all-in later in that same hand--if he is reraised, he *must* borrow money to call, or fold.

Just as in table stakes, no player may remove chips or cash from the table once they are put in play (except small amounts for refreshments, tips, and such)--this includes all markers, whether one's own or those won from other players.

Players should agree before play on the means and time limits of settling markers, and a convenient amount below which all markers must be accepted to simplify play.

See also

- [Poker strategy](#)

[Agression](#) | [Big bet](#) | [Big blind](#) | [Closed](#) | [Declaration](#) | [Isolation](#) | [Pot](#) | [River](#) | [Turn](#) |
[Showdown](#) | [Chopping the blinds](#) | [Table stakes](#)

Agression

In the game of [poker](#), opens and raises are considered **aggressive** plays, while calls and checks are considered passive (though a [check-raise](#) would be considered a very aggressive

play). It is said that "aggression has its own value", meaning that often aggressive plays can make money with weak hands because of [bluff](#) value. Aggressive plays also tend to give the opponents more opportunities to make mistakes.

While it is true that aggressive play is generally superior to passive play, using any play exclusively can lead to predictability, and being too predictable is far worse than being too passive. A player who is constantly aggressive and plays many inferior hands is called a "maniac", and skilled players will take advantage of him by calling him more often, using [isolation](#) plays, and by other means.

If a player is not aggressive with his weaker hands, the opponents can safely fold whenever the player does bet or raise. The appropriate amount of aggression can be computed using [game theory](#), and depends on the game being played and the tendencies of the opponents.

[Steal | Defense](#)

Steal

In [poker](#), the term **steal** is often used as merely a synonym for [bluff](#), but there is a more specific use of the term which is also called an "ante steal" or "blind steal" (depending on whether the game being played uses [antes](#) or [blinds](#)). This play is used either in late [position](#) after several people have folded or when the game is short-handed, and happens most often in tournaments due to the escalating ante/blind structure. It is to [raise](#) with a hand less valuable than what might normally be considered a raising hand, with the hope that the few players remaining will not have a hand worth calling the raise, thereby winning the antes or blinds without further action.

While steals like this don't win much money per hand, they can accumulate to considerable profit if the players to your left are passive enough to not contest many of your steals. Of course, skilled players will recognize repeated steal plays and frequently reraise for [defense](#).

Defense

In [poker](#), certain [aggression](#) plays like [steals](#) can be very effective; players must occasionally reply to them with defensive plays with hands they might not otherwise play. If, for example, the player to your right frequently steals when you have posted a [blind](#), you can be reasonably sure that he is often doing so with inferior hands (otherwise he wouldn't be doing it so often), so you can likely defend your blind (call or raise back) with more hands than you might otherwise.

Big bet

In a fixed-limit poker game, a **big bet** (BB) is the larger of two fixed bet amounts. A big bet is used in the final rounds of a game to increase the pot amount and thereby enable the possibility

of a bluff. Big bets are generally double the wager of the initial or *small bet*. Any multi-round poker game can use big bets to standardize wagers while maintaining a sufficient risk-ratio to encourage bluffing. Casino poker tables use big bets to set a limit to the amount of money a patron can lose in each wager.

Statistical Analysis

Big bets are used in place of variable limit raises to add considerable risk to staying in a game until a hand is shown. This added risk enables other players to bluff or to win a considerable pot when proving that they weren't bluffing. Other methods of adding structure to poker games include buy-in limits and maximum raise limits. Some sort of table or bet limits are required in poker to keep a person with the "deepest pockets" from "buying the game."

Examples

While any multi-round poker game can use big bets, the unlimited buy-in nature of casino style play is best suited for BB limits. Casinos can advertise the relatively low maximum wager of the BB as a way of attracting players, and players can join the table at any time.

Casino style [draw poker](#)

Big bets are used in [draw poker](#) during the final round of betting to weed out tentative players. In theory, only those committed to their hand after seeing their final cards will be motivated to wager twice as much as their previous bet. In practice, however, additional motivation for players to fold is usually needed in a single draw game such as: a half-pot limit, a pot limit, or a spread limit. No limit poker is only employed when table limits are imposed, thereby disallowing casino guests to join the table after play has started.

Texas holdem

In a \$2/\$4 [Texas Holdem](#) game, the *big bet* would be \$4, wagered in each bet of the last two cards. The \$2 would be the *small bet*, wagered during all other bets of the game. Given that a *small bet* is generally half of a *big bet* and that a *small blind* is generally half of the *small bet*, the minimum BB in casino style holdem is four cents. On the other side of the scale, the largest required BB in regular play is that of \$8000 at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. At this table, professionals like Doyle Brunson, Phil Ivey, Daniel Negreanu, Chau Giang, and Gus Hansen, along with wealthy tourists, are required to wager \$8000 in each bet of each of the final two rounds of the game.

Omaha

Big Bets are used in [Omaha](#) poker to allow buy-ins of players at any time. The American casino variant of Omaha, called Omaha Eight-or-Better has a greater odds of winning and

therefore less motivation to fold with a tentative hand. For that reason Omaha Eight-or-Better is sometimes played in a pot limit betting structure instead of big bets.

Casino style seven-card stud

Big bets are used in [seven-card stud](#), generally after the last upcard, to motivate tentative players who already have a lot of money in the pot to fold anyway. By the last upcard, [seven-card stud](#) players have wagered an ante and three rounds of betting. With that much money already in the pot, there is little motivation to drop out during the final two rounds of betting, especially when there is a possibility that another player may be bluffing. The effect of adding the requirement of a big bet to the final two rounds of [seven-card stud](#) betting is that the game becomes one more of skill than of luck.

Big blind

Big blind is a term used to describe the bigger of the two blind bets posted by players to the left of the dealer in [Texas Hold'em Poker](#). Generally, the big blind is equal to the minimum bet.

Closed

In the game of [poker](#), a betting round is said to be **closed** if no player will have the right to [raise](#) in the round. Normally this occurs when a player calls, and the next player whose turn it is to act is the one who made the last raise, so he cannot raise further (this ends the betting round). The round can also be said to be closed before it has actually ended if there are still players remaining to act, but they will not be entitled to raise either because the last raise was a sub-minimum all-in raise (see poker table stakes rules) or because the limit ("cap") on allowed raises has been reached.

The term is also used to describe a category of poker game in which no cards held by individual players are visible to any other player before the [showdown](#). Most forms of [draw poker](#) are closed games (draw games with a [rollout](#) are an exception). Most forms of [stud poker](#), in contrast, are [open](#) games, because some players' cards are dealt face up or are exposed during play ([blind stud](#) games are an exception). Most [community card poker](#) games like [Texas hold 'em](#) are considered closed as well, because the only cards exposed before showdown belong to everyone; the individual players' cards are never seen until showdown.

Declaration

There are several actions in [poker](#) called **declaration**, in which a player formally expresses his intent to take some action (which he is then required to perform at a later point).

Declaring target in a split pot

The most common is the act of declaring "high", "low", or "both ways" (sometimes "swing") in a high-low split game. This is common among home games, while high-low split games in casinos are usually played [cards speak](#).

In a **simultaneous declaration**, each player must declare his intent at the same time, without knowing what any of his opponents intend. This is often done by taking chips under the table, hiding them in one's hand, and then all players opening their hands at once after everyone has chosen. For example, no chips in hand means that the player declares "high", one chip means "low" and two chips means "swing". In a **consecutive declaration**, each player verbally declares in turn, and later players can therefore use that information to make their decision.

The usual rule in split-pot games with a declaration is that half of the pot is awarded to the highest hand among those who declared "high", and half is awarded to the lowest hand among those who declared "low". If no player declared in one direction, then that half is not split from the pot. That is, if all players declared low and no player declared high, then the low hand wins the whole pot instead of just half. If a player declares "both ways", he must have both the highest hand and the lowest hand clearly, with no losses or ties in either direction, to win the whole pot, otherwise he wins nothing (even if he would otherwise have won half). This rule (or one like it--sometimes a "both ways" hand that ties for best in one direction and wins clearly in the other may still be allowed the winning half) is necessary to prevent all players from simply declaring "both ways" every time.

Declaring number of cards to draw

Another use of the term "declaration" is the act of declaring how many cards a player intends to draw in a [draw poker](#) game. It's common for all players to declare their draw intentions before any actual cards are dealt, after which all replacements are dealt at once. This protects the players against marked or accidentally exposed cards.

Other declarations

Other uses include declaring the intended amount of a bet or raise ("A verbal declaration in turn is binding" is a common rule in casinos), declaring the value of a hand upon showdown and declaring how one chooses to receive a card in a choose-before [roll your own](#) game. The rules of each of these games may specify how a player is held accountable for these declarations.

Isolation

In [poker](#), an **isolation** play is usually a [raise](#) designed to encourage one or more players to fold, specifically for the purpose of making the hand a one-on-one contest with a specific opponent. For example, if the player to your right raises and you suspect he is [bluffing](#), you can reraise, forcing most of the other players to fold, leaving you one-on-one with that player.

This is often done with "maniacs" or overly-[aggressive](#) players who frequently play inferior hands. It is also frequently done in [tournaments](#) to isolate a player who is "short stacked", that is,

one who is in imminent danger of elimination, and so is likely to be playing aggressively out of desperation.

Pot

The **pot** in poker refers to the sum of money that players wager during a single [hand](#) or game, according to the [betting rules](#) of the variant being played. It is likely that the word *pot* is related to or derived from the word *jackpot*.

At the conclusion of a hand, either by all but one players folding (discarding their hands), or by [showdown](#), the pot is won or shared by the player(s) holding the winning cards.

Sometimes a pot can be split between many players - this is particularly true in [high-low](#) games where not only the highest hand can win, but under appropriate conditions, the lowest hand will win a share of the pot.

[Split | Dead money](#)

Split

In [poker](#) it is sometimes necessary to divide the **pot** among two or more players rather than awarding it all to a single player. This can happen because of ties, and also by playing intentional split-pot [poker variants](#) (the most typical of these is [high-low split poker](#), where the [high hand](#) and [low hand](#) split the pot).

To split a pot, one player uses both hands to take the chips from the pot and make stacks, placing them side by side to compare height (and therefore value). Equal stacks are placed aside. If there is more than one denomination of chip in the pot, the largest value chip is done first, and then progressively smaller value chips. If there is an odd number of larger chips, smaller chips from the pot can be used to equalize stacks or make change as necessary. Pots are always split down to the lowest denomination of chip used in the game. Three-way ties or further splits can also be done this way.

After fully dividing a pot, there may be a single odd lowest-denomination chip remaining (or two odd chips if splitting three ways, etc). Odd chips can be awarded in several ways, agreed upon before the beginning of the game. The following rules are common:

- If playing a high-low split game and dividing a pot between the high and low hands, always award the odd chip to the high hand.
- If splitting a pot because of tied hands, award the odd chip to the hand that contains the highest-ranking single card, [using suits](#) to break ties if necessary (clubs ranking the lowest, followed by diamonds, hearts, and spades as in bridge).
- (Variation) Between tied hands, award the odd chip to the first player in clockwise rotation from the dealer. (Note that in a casino stud game with a

house dealer and no "buck" this gives an unfair advantage to players on the dealer's left, so the high card by suit method is preferred).

- (Variation) Leave the odd chip as an extra ante for the next deal. This is common in home games.

Sometimes it is necessary to further split a half pot into quarters, or even smaller portions. This is especially common in community card high-low split games such as [Omaha hold'em](#), where one player has the high hand and two or more players have tied low hands. Unfortunate players receiving such a fractional pot call it being *quartered*. When this happens, an exception to the odd chip rules above can be made: if the high hand wins its half of the pot alone, and the low half is going to be quartered, the odd chip (if any) from the first split should be placed in the low half, rather than being awarded to the high hand.

Dead money

In [Poker](#), **Dead money** is the amount of money in the pot other than the equal amounts bet by active remaining players in that pot. For example, money that was put there by players who are no longer eligible to win it because they have folded, or an odd chip left in the pot from a previous deal. For example, 8 players each [Ante](#) \$1, one player opens for \$2, and gets two callers, making the pot total \$14. Three players are now in the pot having contributed \$3 each, for \$9 "live" money; the remaining \$5 (representing the antes of the players who folded) is dead money.

The amount of dead money in a pot affects the [pot odds](#) of plays or rules of thumb that are based on the number of players. For example, a common rule of thumb used by many [Omaha](#) players is that one should raise with a [nut](#) low hand on the last round only if there are four players in the pot, and just call if there are only three. But if there is considerable dead money in the pot, this changes the odds to favor raising even with only three players.

The term "dead money" is also used in a derogatory sense to refer to money put in the pot by players who are still legally eligible to win it, but who are unlikely to do so because they are unskilled. This can also be applied to the player himself: *Let's invite John every week; he's dead money.* The term "dead money" also applies in tournaments, when a player enters who has no chance of winning.

River

The **river**, or fifth street, in [poker](#) is the final fifth card to be dealt to the [board](#), consisting of a face-up community card that each of the players in the game can use to make up their final hand.

Typically found in [Texas Hold'em](#) and [Omaha Hold'em](#), the river follows the completion of the third round of [betting](#) after the [turn](#), and is immediately followed by a fourth and final round of betting which concludes with a [showdown](#).

The river can change the fortune of a game by delivering one player a card which they need to beat another player's already completed [hand](#). A player losing the [pot](#) due only to the river card is said to have been 'rivered' or 'drowned at the river'. Chancing the game on the river card is called 'living by the river', because of the dangers involved. Others claim that it comes from the "river" of tears that the fifth street card has caused. A particularly unlikely change of fortune due to the river card is often called a [bad beat](#); most regular poker players gradually collect a number of *bad beat stories* which they may enjoy reciting.

See also

- [flop \(poker\)](#)

Turn

The **turn**, or fourth street, in [poker](#) is the fourth of five cards dealt to the [board](#), constituting one face-up community card that each of the players in the game can use to make up their final hand.

Typically found in [Texas Hold'em](#) and [Omaha Hold'em](#), the turn follows the completion of the second round of [betting](#) after the [flop](#), and is immediately followed by a third round of betting which concludes with the [river](#).

Showdown

In all [poker](#) games, if more than one player remains after the last betting round, all of the players expose and compare their hands to determine the winner or winners. This is called the **showdown**.

All players should expose their hands immediately, and each player is entitled to see every other player's hand. Because exposing a losing hand gives information to an opponent, many players are reluctant to expose their hands until after their opponents have done so. To avoid this deadlock, [casinos](#) often have a rule specifying which player is required to show his hand first (usually the one who made the last [raise](#)), and then each player after that is required to show his hand in turn. Some players may choose to discard their hand and forfeit their interest in the pot rather than show their losing hand. If this happens, any other player involved in the showdown may not demand that the hand be shown.

Because the act of folding a losing hand rather than showing it down is so common, some players can take advantage of others who do this with a rare play called a "call-bluff". For example, if you know that a player always folds rather than showing his hand if he was [bluffing](#), you might call his last bet even with a hand inferior to the one you suspect him of bluffing with, expecting that he will simply fold before he sees that you don't actually have him beat.

Chopping the blinds

In [poker](#) games with blinds, **chopping the blinds** is a custom that occurs when all active players fold to the blinds, who then remove their bets, ending the hand.

Chopping the blinds is a common occurrence in live ring games, whereas it is not allowed in tournament play, and is seldom, if ever, possible in play on the internet.

Why players chop

Players generally chop for two reasons.

1. Many players do not enjoy playing heads-up, and would rather play multi-way pots. In this case, chopping is more of a social custom.
2. Chopping allows the blinds to avoid paying the rake for a hand that is unlikely to develop into a large pot. In this case, chopping is more of an economic decision.

In higher-limit games, players tend to be tighter, and it is more common for everyone to fold to the blinds. In this case, chopping would occur so frequently that it would be pointless. Furthermore, higher-limit games are much more likely to be short-handed. Finally, the rake in higher-limit games is usually much smaller in comparison to the size of the pot, and if a collection is taken instead of a rake, this removes the economic reason for chopping. For all these reasons, chopping is much more common in lower-limit games than in higher-limit games.

Ethics of chopping

While chopping is a very common practice, some players feel it is antithetical to the nature of poker, especially in short-handed games. Mason Malmuth gives the following reasons why he believes chopping damages a poker game:

1. Chopping creates the illusion of partnerships.
2. Chopping takes the killer instinct out of the game.
3. Chopping allows a tight player to play ante-free.
4. Chopping creates confusion and hard feelings.
5. Chopping ruins short-handed games.

Many of these reasons overlap. For example, players who know each other tend to chop more often. This sometimes encourages these players to chop on future betting rounds, when everyone else has left the pot. This can be very confusing for other players, as it can give the illusion of partnership and collusion, even if such collusion is unintended.

General etiquette

There are some general guidelines which have developed in regard to chopping the blinds, which are as follows:

1. The decision whether to chop or not should be made prior to the hand being dealt. Specifically, the decision to chop should not be based on the strength of

- one's cards. Otherwise, players would only chop their weak blind hands when it comes around to them.
2. Generally, a player should adhere to a consistent *chopping policy* for each game they play. For example, a common chopping policy which many players adopt for community card games such as holdem is to *always* chop if there are at least 6 players dealt in, and to *never* chop if there are fewer than 6 players dealt in. Another common policy is simply never to chop at all.

The important point is that a player's chopping policy should be made *public* and should be *consistent* whenever they play. If a player decides to deviate from his or her usual chopping policy for a single hand or a single session, this should be publicly announced. Players who constantly change their chopping policy from session to session, or worse, from hand to hand, in order to secure an advantage, are generally considered to be engaging in unethical behaviour.

Reference

- Malmuth, Mason, *Poker Essays, Volume II*, Two Plus Two Publishing, ISBN 1-880685-15-9

Table stakes

In [poker](#), **table stakes** refers to the maximum a player can bet and possibly lose during the course of a single hand. It is the money he or she has on the table at the beginning of that hand. This is in contrast to the classic poker notion from the movies of a player "betting the wagon wheels" when a good hand comes along.

When playing with table stakes, if a player runs out of chips during the course of a hand, he or she is considered "[all-in](#)". This means he can neither purchase more chips in the middle of the hand to continue betting, nor can he or she be forced to fold by other players in the hand. As others continue to bet, the player who is all-in stands to win a fraction of the total pot proportional to the amount he or she has risked. Subsequent bets made by the players who are not all in go into a "side pot". When the hand comes to an end, the players who were not all in first turn over their hands to see who wins the side pot. Then, the person who was all-in turns over his or her cards. If he or she holds the best hand on the table, he or she wins the main pot.

Table stakes is the method of choice for virtually all casino settings and "serious" poker environments. When playing no-limit, after all, the lack of table stakes would allow a very rich player to make a large bet on every hand that no other player would be able to call. In typically lower stakes home games, players may be allowed to buy more chips in the middle of a hand. One method, called "[pulling light](#)", allows a player who has run out of chips to begin taking chips *out* of the pot equal to the value of each of their subsequent bets. If they win the pot, they may simply take it, and if they lose they must match the chips they have pulled out of their next buy in.

Playing cards

A **playing card** is a typically hand-sized rectangular (in India, round) piece of heavy paper or thin plastic used for playing card games. A complete set of cards is a **pack** or **deck**. Playing cards are often used as props in magic tricks, as well as occult practices such as cartomancy, and a number of card games involve (or can be used to support) gambling. As a result, their use sometimes meets with disapproval from some religious groups (such as conservative Christians). They are also a popular collectible (as distinct from the cards made specifically for collectible trading card games). Specialty and novelty decks are commonly produced for collectors, often with political, cultural, or educational themes. One side of each card (the "front" or "face") carries markings that distinguish it from the others and determine its use under the rules of the particular game being played, while the other side (the "back") is identical for all cards, usually a plain color or abstract design. In most games, the cards are assembled into a "deck" (or "pack"), and their order is randomized by a procedure called "shuffling" to provide an element of chance in the game.

History

Early history

The origin of playing cards is obscure, but it is almost certain that they began in China after the invention of paper. Ancient Chinese "money cards" have four "suits": coins (or cash), strings of coins (which may have been misinterpreted as sticks from crude drawings), myriads of strings, and tens of myriads. These were represented by ideograms, with numerals of 2-9 in the first three suits and numerals 1-9 in the "tens of myriads". Wilkinson suggests in The Chinese origin of playing cards that the first cards may have been actual paper currency which were both the tools of gaming and the stakes being played for. The designs on modern Mahjong tiles and dominoes likely evolved from those earliest playing cards. The Chinese word p'ai is used to describe both paper cards and gaming tiles.

The time and manner of the introduction of cards into Europe are matters of dispute. The 38th canon of the council of Worcester (1240) is often quoted as evidence of cards having been known in England in the middle of the 13th century; but the games de rege et regina there mentioned are now thought to more likely have been chess. If cards were generally known in Europe as early as 1278, it is very remarkable that Petrarch, in his dialogue that treats gaming, never once mentions them. Boccaccio, Chaucer and other writers of that time specifically refer to various games, but there is not a single passage in their works that can be fairly construed to refer to cards. Passages have been quoted from various works, of or relative to this period, but modern research leads to the supposition that the word rendered cards has often been mistranslated or interpolated.

It is likely that the ancestors of modern cards arrived in Europe from the Mamelukes of Egypt in the late 1300s, by which time they had already assumed a form very close to those in use today. In particular, the Mameluke deck contained 52 cards comprising four "suits": polo sticks, coins, swords, and cups. Each suit contained ten "spot" cards (cards identified by the number of suit symbols or "pips" they show) and three "court" cards named malik (King), n'ib

malik (Viceroy or Deputy King), and thn+ n'ib (Second or Under-Deputy). The Mameluke court cards showed abstract designs not depicting persons (at least not in any surviving specimens) though they did bear the names of military officers. A complete pack of Mameluke playing cards was discovered by L.A. Mayer in the Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul, in 1939; this particular complete pack was not made before 1400, but the complete deck allowed matching to a private fragment dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century. There is some evidence to suggest that this deck may have evolved from an earlier 48-card deck that had only two court cards per suit, and some further evidence to suggest that earlier Chinese cards brought to Europe may have travelled to Persia, which then influenced the Mameluke and other Egyptian cards of the time before their reappearance in Europe.

It is not known whether these cards influenced the design of the Indian cards used for the game of Ganjifa, or whether the Indian cards may have influenced these. Regardless, the Indian cards have many distinctive features: they are round, generally hand painted with intricate designs, and comprise more than four suits (often as many as twelve).

Spread across Europe and early design changes

In the late 1300s, the use of playing cards spread rapidly across Europe. The first widely accepted references to cards are in 1371 in Spain, in 1377 in Switzerland, and, in 1380, they are referenced in many locations including Florence, Paris, and Barcelona. A Paris ordinance dated 1369 does not mention cards; its 1377 update includes cards. In the account-books of Johanna, duchess of Brabant, and her husband, Wenceslaus of Luxemburg, there is an entry dated May 14, 1379 as follows: "Given to Monsieur and Madame four peters, two forms, value eight and a half moutons, wherewith to buy a pack of cards". An early mention of a distinct series of playing cards is the entry of Charles or Charbot Poupart, treasurer of the household of Charles VI of France, in his book of accounts for 1392 or 1393, which records payment for the painting of three sets or packs of cards, which were evidently already well known.

It is clear that the earliest cards were executed by hand, like those designed for Charles VI. However, this was quite expensive, so other means were needed to mass-produce them. It is possible that the art of wood engraving, which led to the art of printing, developed because of the demand for implements of play. If the assumption is true that the cards of that period were printed from wood blocks, the early card makers or cardpainters of Ulm, Nuremberg, and Augsburg, from about 1418 to 1450, were most likely also wood engravers.

Many early woodcuts were colored using a stencil, so it would seem that the art of depicting and coloring figures by means of stencil plates was well known when wood engraving was first introduced. No playing cards engraved on wood exist whose creation can be confirmed as early 1423 (the earliest-dated wood engraving generally accepted). However, in this period professional card makers were established in Germany, so it is probable that wood engraving was employed to produce cuts for sacred subjects before it was applied to cards, and that there were hand-painted and stencilled cards before there were wood engravings of saints. The German *Brief maler* or card-painter probably progressed into the wood engraver; but there is no proof that the earliest wood engravers were the card-makers.

The Europeans experimented with the structure of playing cards, particularly in the 1400s. Europeans changed the court cards to represent European royalty and attendants, originally

"king", "chevalier", and "knavе" (or "servant"). Queens were introduced in a number of different ways. In an early surviving German pack (dated in the 1440s), Queens replace Kings in two of the suits as the highest card. Throughout the 1400s, 56-card decks containing a King, Queen, Knight, and Valet were common. Suits also varied; many makers saw no need to have a standard set of names for the suits, so early decks often had different suit names (though typically 4 suits). The cards manufactured by German printers used the suits of hearts, bells, leaves, and acorns still present in Eastern and Southeastern German decks today used for Skat and other games. Later Italian and Spanish cards of the 15th century used swords, batons, cups, and coins. It is likely that the Tarot deck was invented in Italy at that time, though it is often mistakenly believed to have been imported into Europe by Gypsies. While originally (and still in some places, notably Europe) used for the game of Tarocchi, the Tarot deck today is more often used for cartomancy and other occult practices. This probably came about in the 1780s, when occult philosophers mistakenly associated the symbols on Tarot cards with Egyptian hieroglyphs.

The four suits (hearts, diamonds, spades, clubs) now used in most of the world originated in France, approximately in 1480. These suits have generally prevailed because decks using them could be made more cheaply; the former suits were all drawings which had to be reproduced by woodcuts, but the French suits could be made by stencil. The *trèfle*, so named for its resemblance to the trefoil leaf, was probably copied from the acorn; the *pique* similarly from the leaf of the German suits, while its name derived from the sword of the Italian suits. It is not derived from its resemblance to a pike head, as commonly supposed. In England the French suits were used, and are named hearts, clubs (corresponding to *trèfle*, the French symbol being joined to the Italian name, *bastoni*), spades (corresponding to the French *pique*, but having the Italian name, spade=sword) and diamonds. This confusion of names and symbols is accounted for by Chatto thus:

"If cards were actually known in Italy and Spain in the latter part of the 14th century, it is not unlikely that the game was introduced into this country by some of the English soldiers who had served under Hawkwood and other free captains in the wars of Italy and Spain. However this may be, it seems certain that the earliest cards commonly used in this country were of the same kind, with respect to the marks of the suits, as those used in Italy and Spain."

Court cards have likewise undergone some changes in design and name. Early court cards were elaborate full-length figures; the French in particular often gave them the names of particular heroes and heroines from history and fable. A prolific manufacturing center in the 1500s was Rouen, which originated many of the basic design elements of court cards still present in modern decks. It is likely that the Rouennais cards were popular imports in England, establishing their design as standard there, though other designs became more popular in Europe (particularly in France, where the Parisian design became standard). Rouen courts are traditionally named as follows: the kings of spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs are David, Alexander, Caesar, and Charles (Charlemagne), respectively. The knaves (or "jacks"; French "valet") are Hector (prince of Troy), La Hire (comrade-in-arms to Joan of Arc), Ogier (a knight of Charlemagne), and Judas Maccabeus (who led the Jewish rebellion against the Syrians). The queens are Pallas (warrior goddess; equivalent to the Greek Athena or Roman Minerva), Rachel (biblical mother of Joseph), Argine (the origin of which is obscure; it is an anagram of regina, which is Latin for queen), and Judith (from Book of Judith). Parisian tradition uses the same names, but assigns them to different suits: the kings of spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs are

David, Charles, Caesar, and Alexander; the queens are Pallas, Judith, Rachel, and Argine; the knaves are Ogier, La Hire, Hector, and Judas Maccabee. Oddly, the Parisian names have become more common in modern use, even with cards of Rouennais design.

Later design changes

In early games the kings were *always* the highest card in their suit. However, as early as the late 1400s special significance began to be placed on the nominally lowest card, now called the Ace, so that it sometimes became the highest card and the Two, or Deuce, the lowest. This concept may have been hastened in the late 1700s by the French Revolution, where games began being played "ace high" as a symbol of lower classes rising in power above the royalty. The term "Ace" itself comes from a dicing term in Anglo-Norman language, which is itself derived from the Latin *as* (the smallest unit of coinage). Another dicing term, *trey* (3), sometimes shows up in playing card games.

Corner and edge indices appeared in the mid-1800s, which enabled people to hold their cards close together in a fan with one hand (instead of the two hands previously used). Before this time, the lowest court card in an English deck was officially termed the *Knave*, but its abbreviation ("Kn") was too similar to the King ("K"). However, from the 1600s on the Knave had often been termed the *Jack*, a term borrowed from the game All Fours where the Knave of trumps is termed the Jack. All Fours was considered a low-class game, so the use of the term Jack at one time was considered vulgar. The use of indices changed the formal name of the lowest court card to Jack.

This was followed by the innovation of reversible court cards. Reversible court cards meant that players would not be tempted to make upside-down court cards right side up. Before this, other players could often get a hint of what other players' hands contained by watching them reverse their cards. This innovation required abandoning some of the design elements of the earlier full-length courts.

The joker is an American innovation. Created for the Alsatian game of Euchre, it spread to Europe from America along with the spread of [Poker](#). Although the joker card often bears the image of a fool, which is one of the images of the Tarot deck, it is not believed that there is any relation. In contemporary decks, one of the two jokers is often more colorful or more intricately detailed than the other, though this feature is not used in most card games. The two jokers are often differentiated as "Big" and "Little," or more commonly, "Red" and "Black." In many card games the jokers are not used. Unlike face cards, the design of jokers varies widely. Many manufacturers use them to carry trademark designs.

In the twentieth century, a means for coating cards with plastic was invented, and has taken over the market, producing a durable product. An example of what the old cardboard product was like is documented in Buster Keaton's silent comedy *The Navigator*, in which the forlorn comic tries to shuffle and play cards during a rainstorm.

Alleged symbolism

Popular legend holds that the composition of a deck of cards has religious, metaphysical or astronomical significance: typical numerological elements of the explanation are that the four

suits represent the four seasons, the 13 cards per suit are the 13 phases of the lunar cycle, black and red are for day and night, and finally, if the value of each card is added up - and 1 is added, which is generally explained away as being for a single joker - the result is 365, the number of days in a year. The context for these stories is sometimes given to suggest that the interpretation is a joke, generally being the purported explanation given by someone caught with a deck of cards in order to suggest that their intended purpose was not [gambling](#) ([Urban Legends Reference Pages article](#)).

Playing cards today

Anglo-American

The primary deck of fifty-two playing cards in use today, called **Anglo-American playing cards**, includes thirteen ranks of each of the four English suits, spades (**S**), hearts (**H**), diamonds (**D**) and clubs (**C**), with reversible Rouennais court cards. Each suit includes an ace, depicting a single symbol of its suit; a king, queen, and jack, each depicted with a symbol of its suit; and ranks two through ten, with each card depicting that many symbols (*pips*) of its suit. Two (sometimes one or four) Jokers, often distinguishable with one being more colorful than the other, are included in commercial decks but many games require one or both to be removed before play. Modern playing cards carry index labels on opposite corners (rarely, all four corners) to facilitate identifying the cards when they overlap.

The fanciful design and manufacturer's logo commonly displayed on the Ace of Spades began under the reign of James I of England, who passed a law requiring an insignia on that card as proof of payment of a tax on local manufacture of cards. Until August 4, 1960, decks of playing cards printed and sold in the United Kingdom were liable for taxable duty and the Ace of Spades carried an indication of the name of the printer and the fact that taxation had been paid on the cards. The packs were also sealed with a government duty wrapper.

Though specific design elements of the court cards are rarely used in game play, a few are notable. The jack of spades and jack of hearts are drawn in profile, while the rest of the courts are shown in full face (the exception being the King of Diamonds), leading to the former being called the "one-eyed" jacks. When deciding which cards are to be made wild in some games, the phrase, "acey, deucey, one-eyed jack," is sometimes used, which means that aces, twos, and the one-eyed jacks are all wild. Another such variation, "deuces, aces, one-eyed faces," is used to indicate aces, twos, the jack of hearts, the jack of spades, and the king of hearts are wild. The king of hearts is shown with a sword behind his head, leading to the nickname "suicide king". The King of Diamonds is armed with an ax while the other three kings are armed with swords. The king of Diamonds is sometimes referred to as "the man with the ax" because of this. The Ace of Spades, unique in its large, ornate spade, is sometimes said to be the death card, and in some games is used as a trump card. The Queen of Spades appears to hold a scepter and is sometimes known as "the bedpost queen."

There are theories about who the court cards represent. For example, the Queen of Hearts is believed by some to be a representation of Elizabeth of York - the Queen consort of King Henry VII of England. However the Kings, Queens and Jacks of standard Anglo/American cards do not represent anyone. They stem from designs produced in Rouen before 1516 and by 1540-67 these

Rouen designs show well-executed pictures in the court cards with the typical court costumes of the time. In these early cards the Jack of Spades, Jack of Hearts and the King of Diamonds are shown from the rear, with their heads turned back over the shoulder so that they are seen in profile. However the Rouen cards were so badly copied in England that the current designs are gross distortions of the originals.

Other oddities such as the lack of a moustache on the King of Hearts also have little significance. The King Of Hearts did originally have a moustache but it was lost by poor copying of the original design. Similarly the objects carried by the court cards have no significance. They merely differentiate one court card from another and have also become distorted over time.

The most common sizes for playing cards are poker size ($2\frac{1}{2}$ in \times $3\frac{1}{2}$ in, approx. 63mm \times 88mm) and bridge size ($2\frac{1}{4}$ in \times $3\frac{1}{2}$ in, approx. 56mm \times 87mm), the latter being more suitable for games such as bridge in which a large number of cards must be held concealed in a player's hand. Interestingly, in most casino poker games, the bridge sized card is used. Other sizes are also available, such as a smaller size (usually $1\frac{3}{4}$ in \times $2\frac{1}{2}$ in, approx. 44mm \times 66mm) for solitaire and larger ones for card tricks.

Some decks include additional design elements. [Casino](#) blackjack decks may include markings intended for a machine to check the ranks of cards, or shifts in rank location to allow a manual check via inlaid mirror. Many casino decks and solitaire decks have four indices instead of the usual two. Many decks have large indices, largely for use in [stud poker](#) games, where being able to read cards from a distance is a benefit and hand sizes are small. Some decks use four colors for the suits in order to make it easier to tell them apart: the most common set of colors is black (spades **S**), red (hearts **H**), blue (diamonds **D**) and green (clubs **C**).

When giving the full written name of a specific card, the rank is given first followed by the suit, e.g., "Ace of Spades". Shorthand notation may list the rank first "AS" (as is typical when discussing [poker](#)) or list the suit first (as is typical in listing several cards in bridge) "SAKQ". Tens may be either abbreviated to T or written as 10.

German and Austrian

German and Austrian suits may have different appearances. Many southern Germans and Austrians prefer decks with hearts, bells, leaves, and acorns (for hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs), as mentioned above. In the game Skat, Eastern Germany players used the German deck, while players in western Germany mainly used the French deck. After the reunification a compromise deck was created, with French symbols, but German colors. Therefore, many "French" decks in Germany now have yellow or orange diamonds and green spades.

Hungarian

The Hungarian Card was born in the times before the 1848-49 Hungarian Freedom Fights, when revolutionary movements were awakening all over in Europe. It is a 32 card deck, its four colors include hearts, bells, leaves and acorns. The numbering includes VII, VIII, IX, X, Under, Over, King and Ace. The Aces show the for seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. The characters of the Under and Over cards were taken from the drama, William Tell, written by Schiller in 1804, that was shown at Kolozsvar in 1827. It was long believed that the card was

invented in Vienna at the Card Painting Workshop of Piatnik Ferdinand, however in 1974 the very first deck was found in an English Private Collection, and it has shown the name of the inventor and creator of deck as Schneider József a Master Card Painter at Pest, and the date of its creation as 1837. Interesting that he have chosen the characters of a Swiss drama as his characters for his over and under cards, however if he would have chosen Hungarian heroes or freedom fighters, his deck of cards would have never made it into distribution, due to the heavy censorship of the goverment at the time.

Games that are played with this deck including Ulti, Snapszer (or 66), Zsirozas, Preferansz and Lorum. Explanations of these games can be found at [The Card Games Website](#).

Italian

Italian playing cards most commonly consist of a deck of 40 cards. Hundreds of different designs are in use in different parts of the country (about one per province). The suits are coins (sometimes suns or sunbursts), swords, cups and clubs (sometimes batons), and each suit contains an ace (or one), numbers two through seven, and three face cards. The face cards are:

- King - a man standing, wearing a crown
- Knight - a man sitting on a horse
- Jack - a younger man standing, without a crown

Unlike Anglo-American cards, Italian cards do not have any numbers (or letters) identifying their value. The cards' value is determined by identifying the face card or counting the number of suit characters.

Spanish

The four aces of the **Spanish playing cards** (*naipes*), as styled in the best-selling deck made by Heraclio Fournier. The *palos* (suits) are (left to right, top to bottom): *copas* (cups), *oros* (coins), *bastos* (batons) and *espadas* (swords). Notice the pattern of interruptions (*la pinta*) that identifies each suit in the horizontal line section of the card frames.

The traditional Spanish deck (referred to as *baraja española* in Spanish) is a direct descendant of the Tarot deck. However, like most other decks derived from it, the Spanish deck kept only the minor arcana (with the exception of the 10s and the queen of each suit, which were dropped), while all of the major arcana from the Tarot deck were discarded. Being a Latin-suited deck (like the Italian deck), it is organized into four *palos* (suits) that closely match those of the Tarot deck: *oros* ("golds" or coins, cf. the Tarot suit of pentacles), *copas* (cups), *espadas* (swords) and *bastos* (batons or clubs, cf. the Tarot suit of wands). Apart from its characteristic icon, each suit can also be identified by a pattern of interruptions in the horizontal sections of the quadrangular line that frames each card (this pattern is known as *la pinta*): none for *oros*, one for *copas*, two for *espadas* and three for *bastos*.

The cards (*naipes* or *cartas* in Spanish) are all numbered, but unlike in the standard Anglo-French deck, the card numbered 10 is the first of the court cards (instead of a card depicting ten coins/cups/swords/batons); so each suit has only twelve cards. The three court or face cards in each suit are as follows: *la sota* ("the knave", jack or page, numbered 10 and equivalent to the Anglo-French card J), *el caballo* ("the horse", horseman, knight or cavalier, numbered 11 and

used instead of the Anglo-French card Q; note the original Tarot deck has both a cavalier and a queen of each suit, while the Anglo-French deck dropped the former, and the Spanish deck dropped the latter), and finally *el rey* ("the king", numbered 12 and equivalent to the Anglo-French card K). Many Spanish games involve forty-card decks, with the 8s and 9s removed.

The Spanish deck is used not only in Spain, but also in other countries where Spain maintained an influence (e.g., the Philippines and Puerto Rico) 1. Among the games played with this deck are: el mus (a very popular and highly regarded vying game of Basque origin), la brisca, el tute (with many variations), el guiñote, la escoba (a trick-taking game), el julepe, el cinquillo, las siete y media, la mona, el truc (or truco), and el cuajo (a matching game from the Philippines).

Japanese

The standard 54-card deck is also commonly known as a poker deck or—in Japan—a Trump deck, to differentiate it from "dedicated" card games such as UNO, or other dynamic card decks like Hanafuda and Kabufuda.

Playing card symbols in Unicode

The Unicode standard defines 8 characters for card suits in the Miscellaneous Symbols block,

| | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| U+2660 dec: 9824 | U+2661 dec: 9825 | U+2662 dec: 9826 | U+2663 dec: 9827 |
| ♠ | ♥ | ♦ | ♣ |
| BLACK SPADE SUIT WHITE HEART SUIT WHITE DIAMOND SUIT BLACK CLUB SUIT | | | |
| ♠ | ♡ | ♢ | ♣ |
| ♠ | ♡ | ♢ | ♣ |
| ♠ | | | ♣ |
| U+2664 dec: 9828 | U+2665 dec: 9829 | U+2666 dec: 9830 | U+2667 dec: 9831 |
| ♤ | ♥ | ♦ | ♧ |
| WHITE SPADE SUIT BLACK HEART SUIT BLACK DIAMOND SUIT WHITE CLUB SUIT | | | |
| ♤ | ♥ | ♦ | ♧ |
| ♤ | ♥ | ♦ | ♧ |
| | ♥ | ♦ | |

from U+2660 to U+2667:

Reference

- Parlett, David. *The Oxford Guide to Card Games*. 1990. ISBN 0-19-214165-1.

See also

- [Card game](#)

[High card by suit](#) | [Wild cards](#) | [Burn cards](#) | [Community card](#) | [Cut](#) | [Out](#) | [Stripped deck](#) | [Suited connectors](#)

High card by suit

High card by suit refers to assigning relative values to [playing cards](#) of equal rank based on their suit.

Most [poker](#) games do not rank suits; the ace of spades is just as good as the ace of clubs. However, small issues (such as deciding who deals first) are sometimes resolved by dealing one card to each player. If two players draw cards of the same rank, one way to break the tie is to use an arbitrary hierarchy of suits.

No standard ranking of suits exists for all poker games. Even within a particular poker variant, the order of suits differs by location. (For example, the ranking most commonly used in the United States is not the one typically used in Italy.) Two common conventions are:

- Alternating colors: **diamonds** (lowest), followed by **clubs**, **hearts**, and **spades** (highest). (This ranking is also used in the Chinese card game Big Two or Choi Dai Di).
- Alphabetical order: **clubs** (lowest), followed by **diamonds**, **hearts**, and **spades** (highest). (This ranking is also used in the game of bridge). This mnemonic rank is consistent with the suits representation of the four major divisions of medieval society, Spades (nobility, highest), Hearts (clergy), Diamonds (merchants), and Clubs (peasants).

Cards are always compared by rank first, and only then by suit. For example, using the "alphabetical order" ranking, the ace of clubs ranks higher than any king, but lower than the ace of diamonds). High card by suit is *never* used to break ties between [poker hands](#), but can be used in the following situations, as well as various others, based upon the circumstances of the particular game:

- Randomly selecting a player or players.

To randomly select a player to deal, to choose the game, to move to another table, or for other reasons, deal each player one card and the player with high card by suit is selected. Multiple players can be selected this way.

- Assigning the bring-in.

In games such as [Seven-card stud](#), where the player with the lowest-ranking face-up card is required to open the first betting round for a minimal amount, ties can be broken by suit.

- Awarding odd chips in a split pot.

In [High-low split](#) games, or when two players' hands tie, the pot must be [split](#) evenly between them. When there is an odd amount of money in the pot that can't be split evenly, the odd low-denomination chip can be given to the player whose hand contains

the high card by suit. (This solution is not necessary in games with [blinds](#), in which case the odd chip between high and low is awarded to the high hand, and the odd chip between a split high or split low is awarded to the first player following the dealer button.)

- Breaking ties in a chip race

During [poker tournaments](#), a chip race is used to "color up" large numbers of smaller-denomination chips, and a modified deal is used to assign leftover chips. Ties in the deal are broken by suit.

See also: [Poker](#)

Wild cards

[Poker games](#) may contain one or more [cards](#) designated as **wild**. These may be jokers, or they may be normal ranked and suited cards pressed into wild card duty ("deuces wild" is a common variant). There are two rules in common use regarding wildcards: "fully wild" cards and the "[bug](#)".

A card that is fully wild can be designated by its holder as any card he chooses with no restrictions. Under this rule, for example, a hand with any natural pair and a wild card becomes three of a kind. The common rule in [casinos](#) is that a wild card plays as a bug, which is given the rank of ace unless designating it as a different card would complete a [straight](#), [flush](#), or [straight flush](#). Under this rule, a hand such as K-K-Joker-5-2 is just a pair of kings (with an ace [kicker](#)), but any four same-suit cards with a bug make a flush, and a hand such as 7-Joker-5-4-3 makes a straight.

Two exceptions to standard poker practice sometimes seen in home games are the [double-ace flush](#) rule, and the natural wins rule. The latter rule states that between hands that would otherwise tie, the hand with fewer wild cards wins. This is not common in casinos and should be treated as an exception to standard practice (as is the double-ace flush).

There is a tendency among some players to regard wild cards as "impure" or treat wild card games as silly or amateurish. While it is certainly true that a game with too many wild cards can become so random that all skill is lost, the occasional use of wild cards is a good way to add variation to a game and add opportunities for skillful play. In particular, [five-card draw](#) is traditionally played with a joker in California (which plays as a bug), and also plays well with deuces fully wild. [Seven-card stud](#) plays well with one or two bugs, especially when played [high-low split](#). Other games such as [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold'em](#) do not play well with wild cards. For some players, the problem with wild-card games is that the winner is almost always the hand with the most wild cards, making the other cards irrelevant, and making skill less important.

Another issue with wild cards is that they distort the hand frequencies. In 5-card stud, the stronger hands are less frequent than the weaker hands; i.e., no pair is most common, followed by one pair, two pair, three of a kind, etc. When you add wild cards, the stronger hands gain frequency while the weaker hands lose frequency. For example, if you have a pair and a wild

card, you will always choose three of a kind rather than two pair. This causes three of a kind to be more common than two pair.

Bug

Bug

A **bug** in [poker](#) is a limited form of [wild card](#). One or both jokers are often added to the deck and played as bugs. The bug is played as an ace unless designating it as a different card would complete a [straight](#), [flush](#), or [straight flush](#). For example, the hand **K-K-X-5-2** is just a pair of kings (with an ace [kicker](#)), but any four same-suit cards with a bug make a flush, and a hand such as **7-X-5-4-3** makes a straight.

Burn cards

In [card games](#), a **burn card** is a [playing card](#) dealt from the top of a deck, and discarded ("burned"), unused by the players. This is often done in [casinos](#) to deter a form of cheating known as card marking, as well as to provide extra cards for use when an irregularity of play occurs. In [poker](#), the top card of the deck stub is burned at the beginning of each betting round, so that players who might have been able to read markings on that card during the previous round cannot take advantage of that information (far less, at least; knowledge of a burn card might occasionally be marginally useful, such as knowing there is one less Ace in the deck, but far less so than having it in play).

Burn cards are almost always placed in the discard pile face down, so no players know what card was burned.

Sometimes a mis-dealt card (such as one of the down cards in poker that has flashed during the deal) will be used as the burn card--in those cases, the card should be immediately placed face up on the deck after the deal is complete.

Community card

In [poker](#), a card dealt face-up to the table (not to any one player) that is shared by more than one player is called a **community card** or **shared card** or **widow card**. For example, if one individual player holds a hand of **K-7-3-3** and there is a **K** as a community card shared by all players, then that player's hand plays as [Two pair](#) upon [Showdown](#), **K-K-3-3-7**. If another player on that same deal with the same shared **K** held cards of **A-Q-J-10**, his hand upon showdown would be the ace-high [Straight](#) **A-K-Q-J-10**.

Often several community cards are dealt to the table, shared by all players, and subject to variant-specific rules about how many and which of the cards may be used in each player's hand. Such a set of community cards is often called a "board" or "widow" (though this latter term is

inconsistent with its use in other card games). The board is usually dealt in a simple line, but some games may have elaborate layouts of community cards with special rules about what combinations of them can be used. For example, the game [Texas hold'em](#) ends with each player holding two cards in his individual hand, and a board of five community cards in a simple line shared by everyone; each player then plays the best five-card hand he can make out of the two in his hand combined with the five he shares in any combination. In [Omaha hold'em](#), game rules restrict players to using exactly three (no more and no fewer) of the five community cards combined with exactly two of the four cards dealt to each player to make a hand. In Tic tac toe, the board is a 3x3 array of nine cards, and players must use exactly three cards from a row, column, or diagonal of the board.

Many [Community card games](#) are strategically interesting because shared cards can give players hands of similar value, making skilled play important. For example, when the five community cards on a Texas hold'em board include four of one suit, any player with a card of that suit in his hand can play a [Flush](#) (but the one with the highest-ranking card of that suit is likely to have the best flush and win).

Cut

After a deck of cards is shuffled by the dealer, it is often given to a player other than the one who performed the shuffle for a procedure called a **cut**.

Procedure

The dealer completes their shuffle, and then sets the cards face-down on the table near the designated player. The player **cuts** the deck by removing a contiguous range of cards from the deck, and places them either on top or bottom of the remaining cards. The simplest form of the cut is done by taking, roughly, the top one-half of the cards, and placing them on the table. Either the player cutting or the dealer then completes the cut by placing the remaining bottom portion on top of the cards that have been cut off.

Once the cut is complete, the dealer then picks up the deck, straightens or "squares" it, then deals the cards.

Etiquette

The continuous section may also be taken from the middle of the deck, though in some settings this is considered poor etiquette or against the rules. Likewise, a cut involving a very small number of cards, such as taking only the top card as a cut, is not often acceptable. The same is true when a player takes more than one section of cards from the deck.

During informal [card games](#), the dealer is typically not required to offer the cut, and even if offered, the designated player can decline the request. On the other hand, any player may specifically request to cut the cards before they are dealt. If a cut is requested by a player, it must be granted by the dealer.

In formal settings, such as during high-stakes casino or tournament settings, an offer to cut the deck is mandatory and the designated player must perform the cut.

Reasons

The practice of **cutting** is primarily a method of reducing the likelihood of someone cheating by manipulating the order of cards to gain advantage. Even if the dealer does not plan on cheating, cutting will prevent suspicions, thus many rules require it. Some players also consider the cut to be *lucky*.

See also

- [Card games](#)
- [Playing cards](#)

The term **cutting** is also used for a random selection procedure in which a player performs the first part of a cut (removing a group of cards from the top of a deck), then looks at the value of the card on the bottom of that portion, then replaces it. Another player then does the same, and the values of the cards thus exposed are used for such things as selecting who deals the game. This is often used as a pure gamble as well, much like flipping coins.

Out

In a [poker](#) game with more than one betting round, an **out** is any unseen card that, if drawn, will improve your hand to one that is likely to win. Knowing the number of outs you have is an important part of poker strategy. For example in [draw poker](#), a hand with four diamonds has nine outs to make a flush: there are 13 diamonds in the deck, and you've seen four of them. If you have two small pairs, and you believe that it will be necessary for you to make a [full house](#) to win, then you have four outs: the two remaining cards of each rank that you hold.

Note that the hidden cards of one's opponents may affect your calculation of outs. For example, assume that a [Texas hold 'em](#) board looks like this after the third round: **5S KD 7D JS**, and that you are holding **AD 10D**. Your current hand is just a high ace, which is not likely to win unimproved, so you have a [drawing](#) hand. You have a minimum of nine outs for certain, called [nut outs](#), because they will make your hand the best possible: those are the **2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and Q** of diamonds (which will give you an ace-flush with no possible better hand on the board) and the **Q** of clubs and hearts, which will give you an ace-high straight with no higher hand possible. The **5D** and **JD** will also make you an ace-high flush, so those are *possible outs* since they give you a hand that is likely to win, but they also make it possible for another player to have a full house (if he has something like **KS KC**, for example). Likewise, the **QS** will fill your ace-high straight, but will also make it possible for some opponent to have a spade flush. It is possible that your opponent could have as little as something like **7C 9C** (making a pair of sevens); in this case even catching any of the three remaining aces or tens will give you a pair to beat his, so

those are even more *potential outs*. So you have nine guaranteed outs, and possibly as many as 18, depending on what you expect your opponent to have.

See also: [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#)

Stripped deck

A **stripped deck** is a set of [playing cards](#) from which cards have been removed. This kind of deck is used in certain [poker variants](#), and the cards that are removed are usually low-ranking ones. For example, the Australian game of Manila uses a 32-card deck in which all cards below the rank of **7** are removed, and [Mexican stud](#) is played with the **8s**, **9s**, and **10s** removed from the deck (and a joker added). This may require adjusting hand values: in both of these games, a [flush](#) ranks above a [full house](#), because having fewer cards of each suit available makes flushes rarer.

A hand such as **6-7-J-Q-K** plays as a [straight](#) in Mexican stud, skipping over the removed ranks. Some places may allow a hand such as **10-9-8-7-A** to play as a straight (by analogy to a [wheel](#)) in the 32-card game, the **A** playing low and skipping over the removed ranks (although this is not the case in Manila). Finally, the relative frequency of straights versus [three of a kind](#) is also sensitive the deck composition (and to the number of cards dealt), so some places may play that trips beat a straight, but the difference is small enough that this complication isn't necessary for most games.

[Five-card stud](#) is often played with a stripped deck as well, usually the same 32-card deck as Manila (with all cards of rank **2** through **6** removed). In lively home games it might work better to only strip three ranks (**2s** through **4s**) if you have seven or eight players; with only two or three players you can strip **7s** and **8s** as well, leaving the same 24-card deck used in euchre. In any of these cases, a flush should rank above a full house (in the 24-card case it's actually more rare than [four of a kind](#), but is rarely played that way). It should be noted that stripped deck five-card stud is a game particularly well-suited to cheating by [collusion](#), because it is easy for partners to signal a single hole card and the relative value of knowing the location of a single card is higher than with a full deck.

Suited connectors

Suited connectors is a [poker](#) term referring to pocket cards which are of the same suit and consecutive in rank. Example: **AS 2S**, **QH JH**, **5D 4D**. In [Texas hold'em](#), suited connectors play well against multiple players when they can see the flop cheaply. A player will generally not raise with them, because raising usually causes a few players to fold, decreasing the [pot odds](#) in the event of a straight or flush draw on the [flop](#). However, a hand like ace-king suited might do well to raise because the cards will also work well if they pair, which is the more likely possibility, so the pot odds are less important. The probability of drawing suited connectors is 3.92%, and the odds are 24.5:1.

Another definition of suited connectors includes any two suited cards which, together, can make a straight. Example: **2S 4S, QH 9H, 7D 9D**. Hands such as **2S 4S** are also known as one gap hands.

Rule variations

[Rule variations in poker](#).

Overview

There are many types of poker games. While poker was originally played with each player receiving five cards and only one betting round, it has expanded to include hundreds of variants. Currently, the most popular one is [Texas Hold'em](#), but other variants are very popular.

Here are some common rule variations:

1. [High-low split](#): the highest and lowest hands split the pot. Generally there is a qualifier for the low hand. For example, the low hand must have 5 cards with ranks of 8 or less. In most high-low games the usual rank of poker hands is observed, so that an unsuited broken straight (7-5-4-3-2) wins low (see Morehead, Official Rules of Card Games). In a variant, based on Lowball, where only the low hand wins, a straight or a flush does not matter for a low hand. So the best low hand is 5-4-3-2-A, suited or not.
2. Players can pass cards to each other. An example of this would be [Anaconda](#).
3. 'Kill game'. When a fixed limit game is played and a player wins two pots in a row, the stakes are doubled.
4. [Wild cards](#) are added. This can range from simply making deuces wild to the wild 7-stud variant of baseball.
5. A [twist](#) round in which players can buy another card from the deck. If a player does not like their card, they can purchase another one by adding money to the pot. This is sometimes called a "Tittle."
6. A [stripped deck](#) may be used. Poker was first played with only 20 cards. In the spirit of poker history, players will sometimes only play with a stripped deck. A popular poker game in Spain is played with cards 8-A. It is played similar to hold'em, except that one card is dealt at a time and you must use both of your hole cards.
7. Each player is dealt a certain amount of cards. Then there is usually a number of [community cards](#) that all players can use. When forming a poker hand a player may use cards from his hand and the "community cards". Examples of community card poker include [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold 'em](#)

See also

- [List of poker variants](#)
- [High-low split](#)

High-low split

In traditional [poker](#) games, the player with the best traditional [hand](#) wins the whole pot. [Lowball](#) variations award the pot to the lowest hand, by any of several methods (see [Low hand \(poker\)](#)). **High-low split** games are those in which the pot is divided between the player with the best traditional hand (called the [high hand](#)) and the player with the [low hand](#).

There are two common methods for playing high-low split games, called [declaration](#) and [cards speak](#). In a declaration game, each player declares (either verbally or using markers such as chips) whether he wishes to contest for the high hand or the low hand. The lowest hand among those who declared low wins that half of the pot, and the highest hand among those who declared high wins that half (for further details, see [declaration](#)). In a cards speak game, all players simply reveal their cards at [showdown](#) and the hands are evaluated by all players; high hand wins half of the pot and low hand wins the other half.

Especially when using the [ace-to-five low](#) method, it is possible for one player to have both the low hand and the high hand, and therefore win all of the pot (called "scooping," "hogging" the pot, or "going pig"). In the event more than one player ties for either high or low, the pot can be further split into quarters or smaller fractions. For example, if one player has the high hand on showdown, and two other players tie for the best low hand, the high hand wins half of the pot and each low hand wins only a quarter of the pot.

It is common, especially in cards speak games, to require a certain hand value or better to win the low half of the pot, called a [qualifier](#). For example in an "eight or better to qualify low" game, a player with an eight-high hand (or better low such as seven-high) is entitled to win the low half of the pot (assuming his hand defeats all other low hands), but a player with a 10-high or 9-high hand cannot win, even if his hand is the lowest. In this case, the high hand wins the entire pot. There is generally no qualifier to win high, although one common variant is [any pair/no pair](#), where a hand of at least a pair is required to win high and any hand with [no pair](#) is required to win low.

In high-low split games where each player is dealt more than five cards, each player chooses five of his cards to play as his high hand, and/or five of his cards to play as his low hand. The sets may overlap: for example, in [seven-card stud](#) played high-low split, a player dealt **7-7-6-4-4-3-2** can play a high hand of **7-7-4-4-6** (two pair, sevens and fours) and a low hand of **7-6-4-3-2** (seven-high).

Note that [bluffs](#) can be especially powerful in high-low split games, because a player making a successful bluff wins the whole pot rather than having to share it. This fact also makes bluffs less likely to succeed.

[Freeroll](#)

Freeroll

A **freeroll** is a situation that arises during [poker](#) play (usually when only two players remain) before the last card has been dealt, in which one player is guaranteed to at least split the pot with his opponent no matter what the final cards are, but where there is some chance he can win the whole pot if certain final cards are dealt. This most commonly occurs in a [high-low split](#) game

where one player knows that he has a guaranteed low hand made, his opponent cannot make a better low no matter what the last card is, but the player who is low might possibly catch a lucky card that gives him a straight or flush, winning high as well.

Here's an example from [Texas hold'em](#): Angie holds **KC 10C**, and Burt holds **KH 10H**. After round three, the board is **AC QS JH 4C**. Both players have an ace-high straight, the current [nut hand](#), and so they will most likely split the pot. But if the final card happens to be a club, Burt's straight will lose to Angie's flush. There is no other possible final card that will give Burt more than a split; only Angie can improve, so she is *freerolling* Burt.

If a player knows he has a freeroll, he can raise the pot with impunity, and often a less-skilled opponent with a good hand who does not realize that he is on the wrong end of the freeroll will continue to put in raises with no possible hope of gain.

In Hold'em, it is possible to know you have a freeroll without seeing your opponents cards. After the turn if the board has two aces and two kings all of separate suits, and you hold **AK**, you are guaranteed a minimum of a split. However, there is a possibility of you getting the nuts, with a guaranteed winning hand, if an Ace or a King hits on the river.

The term is also used to describe a [tournament](#) with no entry fee.

Variants

The game of [poker](#) has many **variations**, most of them created in the United States in the mid-1900s. The standard [order of play](#) applies to most of these games, but to fully specify a poker game requires details about which [hand values](#) are used, the number of betting rounds, and exactly what cards are dealt and what other actions are taken between rounds. Any game may also use any [betting structure](#).

They can be divided into the following groups:

- **Draw poker**: Games in which players are dealt a complete hand, hidden, and then improve it by replacing cards. The most common of these is [Five-card draw](#).
- **Stud poker**: Games in which each player receives a combination of face-up cards and face-down cards in multiple betting rounds. The most common of these are [Seven-card stud](#) and [Five-card stud](#).
- **Community card poker**: Games in which each player's incomplete hidden hand is combined with shared face-up cards. The most common of these is [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold'em](#).
- **Miscellaneous poker**: Other games, or hybrids of the foregoing games.

It is not uncommon for players in home games to invent ad-hoc variants during a playing session. Such games rarely achieve the popularity of the well-known variants, for the good reason that the well-known variants have been selected for playability over many years. "Playability" varies with the players, though, so it is quite common for a single group of players with shared tastes to become accustomed to one of these variants. When joining an established group as a new player, it is important to fully understand the rules of any such game that they commonly play.

See also

- Non-standard poker hands
- Rule variations (poker)

[List of poker variants](#) | [Draw poker](#) | [Stud poker](#) | [Community card poker](#) | [Misc. poker games](#)

List of poker variants

The game of [poker](#) has many [variations](#), most of them created in the United States in the mid-1900s. The standard order of play applies to most of these games, but to fully specify a poker game requires details about which [hand values](#) are used, the number of betting rounds, and exactly what cards are dealt and what other actions are taken between rounds. Any game may also use any [betting structure](#).

They can be divided into the following groups:

- [Draw poker](#): Games in which players are dealt a complete hand, hidden, and then improve it by replacing cards. The most common of these is [Five-card draw](#).
- [Stud poker](#): Games in which each player receives a combination of face-up cards and face-down cards in multiple betting rounds. The most common of these are [Seven-card stud](#) and [Five-card stud](#).
- [Community card poker](#): Games in which each player's incomplete hidden hand is combined with shared face-up cards. The most common of these is [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold'em](#).
- [Miscellaneous poker](#): Other games, or hybrids of the foregoing games.

It is not uncommon for players in home games to invent ad-hoc variants during a playing session. Such games rarely achieve the popularity of the well-known variants, for the good reason that the well-known variants have been selected for playability over many years. "Playability" varies with the players, though, so it is quite common for a single group of players with shared tastes to become accustomed to one of these variants. When joining an established group as a new player, it is important to fully understand the rules of any such game that they commonly play.

See also

- Non-standard poker hands
- Rule variations (poker)

Draw poker

Draw poker is any [poker variant](#) in which each player is dealt a complete hand before the first betting round, and then develops the hand for later rounds by replacing cards.

The descriptions below assume that you are familiar with the general [game play](#) of poker, and with [hand values](#) (both high and low variations). They also make no assumptions about what [betting structure](#) is used. In home games, it is typical to use an [ante](#), and betting always begins with the player to the dealer's left. In casino play, it is more common to use [blinds](#); the first betting round thus begins with the player to the left of the big blind, and subsequent rounds begin with the player to the dealer's left, thus draw games are very [positional](#).

Some sample deals below will assume that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing in the examples, Bob, who is sitting to her left, Carol to his left, and David to Carol's left.

Standard five-card draw

This is often the first poker variant learned by most players, and is very common in home games although it is now quite rare in casino and tournament play. When played skillfully, it can become monotonous. The lowball variations described later are more interesting games. Two to eight players can play.

Play begins with each player being dealt five cards, one at a time, all face down. The remaining deck stub is placed aside, often protected by placing a chip or other marker on it. Players pick up the cards and hold them in their hands, being careful to keep them concealed from the other players. The first betting round occurs at this point, starting with the player to the dealer's left. If more than one player remains after this round, the "draw" phase begins. Each player specifies how many of his cards he wishes to replace, and discards that many from his hand. The deck stub is retrieved, and after a [burn card](#) is dealt, each player in turn is dealt the same number of cards he discarded, so that each player again has five cards. It is important that each player discards the cards he wishes to replace before he takes any replacements, and that he take the same number of replacements as he discarded. A second betting round occurs after the draw phase, followed by a showdown if more than one player remains.

A common "house rule" in some places is that a player may not replace more than three cards, unless he draws four cards while keeping an ace (or wild card). This rule is only needed for low-limit social games where many players will stay for the draw, and will help avoid depletion of the deck stub. In more serious games such as those played in casinos it is unnecessary and generally not used. A rule that *is* used by many casinos is that a player is not allowed to draw five consecutive cards from the deck. In this case, if a player wishes to replace all five of his cards, he is given four of them in turn, the other players are given their draws, and then the dealer returns to that player to give him his fifth replacement (if no later player drew, it is necessary to deal a burn card first).

Another common house rule is that the bottom card of the deck is never given as a replacement, to avoid the possibility of someone who might have seen it during the deal using that information. If the deck stub is depleted during the draw before all players have received their replacements, the last players can receive cards chosen randomly from among those discarded by previous players. For example, if the last player to draw wants three replacements but there are only two cards remaining in the deck stub, the dealer gives the player the one top

card he can give, then shuffles together the bottom card of the deck, the burn card if any, and the earlier players' discards (but not the three discards of the last player!), and finally deals two more replacements to the last player.

Example: Alice deals five cards to each player and places the deck stub aside. Bob opens the betting round by betting \$1. Carol folds, David calls, and Alice calls, closing the betting round. Bob now declares that he wishes to replace three of his cards, so he removes those three cards from his hand and discards them. Alice retrieves the deck stub, deals a burn card, and then deals three cards directly to Bob, who puts them in his hand. David discards one card, and Alice deals one card to him from the deck stub. Alice now discards three of her own cards, and replaces them with three from the top of the deck stub. Now a second betting round begins. Bob checks, David bets \$3, Alice calls, and Bob folds, ending the second betting round. David shows a flush, and Alice shows two pair, so David takes the pot.

Other draw games

Gardena jackpots ("Jacks to open" or simply "Jackpots")

Played as above, with standard hand values, and with a single joker in the deck acting as a [bug](#). Always played with an ante and no blinds. On the first betting round, no player is allowed to open the betting unless his hand already contains a pair of jacks or a better hand. Other players who checked on the first round may subsequently call or raise if someone else opens. If no player opens, a new deal begins and everyone antes again into the same pot. The player who opened the betting keeps his discarded cards near him on the table so that he can prove, if necessary, that he had a sufficient opening hand. For example, a player with the **K, J, 9, and 7** of clubs and the **J** of hearts has a pair of jacks and may open. He may wish to "break openers" in this case by discarding the jack of hearts in an attempt to make the club flush, so he keeps the discarded jack to prove that he was entitled to open.

The game is named after the city of Gardena, California, where this game was especially popular from the 1930s to 1970s (though it was always secondary to lowball). At that time, there were more public poker tables in that small city than in all the rest of the United States. Public poker rooms are still a big industry there, though Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and other locations now have many more poker rooms than they did at that time. Because "Jacks to open" was the primary form of high-hand draw poker played there, traditional draw poker was often described by the retronym "Guts to open".

In home games, it is common that when a deal is "passed out" (that is, when no one opens), the players re-ante, and the qualifier to open is raised to a pair of queens. If that deal is passed out, the qualifier is raised to kings, and finally to aces. This is called "progressive" jackpots.

California lowball

This was the primary poker game played in California during the heyday of Gardena in the 1970s. It is still played today, though its popularity has somewhat lessened since the introduction of [stud poker](#) and [community card poker](#) to the state.

Played as above, using [ace-to-five low](#) hand values, with a single joker in the deck. Always played with blinds rather than antes, so players may not check on the first betting round (but may on the second round). A player with a 7-high hand or better who checks after the draw forfeits his right to win any money placed in the pot after the draw. (In other words, you may not check a "seven" unless you intend to fold when someone else bets). Another common rule in low-limit games is that a player who checks on the second betting round may not subsequently raise on that round. This latter rule is never used in games with a pot limit or no limit betting structure.

Badougi

Also sometimes known as Padooki, Badougi is a four card [ace-to-five low](#) lowball variant where traditional poker hand rankings are changed. A Badougi is a four card hand where all the cards are of different ranks and suits. Any cards which match another card in rank or suit does not play and the first criteria for evaluating hands is the number of cards which are playing. The following is the ranking of several example of hands from best to worst:

1. Ace of spades, 2 of clubs, 3 of hearts, 4 of diamonds: 4 card 4 high best possible Badougi
2. 4 of spades, 6 of hearts, 8 of diamonds, J of clubs: 4 card J high Badougi
3. Ten of clubs, J of hearts, Q of Diamonds, K of hearts: 4 card worst possible Badougi
4. Ace of hearts, Ace of diamonds, 4 of clubs, 5 of spades: 3 card hand, 5 high
5. Ace of clubs, Ace of spades, 4 of spades, 6 of spades: 2 card hand, 4 high

Other forms of lowball

Five-card draw, with no joker, and [deuce-to-seven low](#) hand values is called "Kansas City" or "Low Poker" or even "Billy Baxter" draw in honor of the player who dominated the world championship in the event for many years. The 7-high rule and the no check-and-raise rule do not apply. In the eastern United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, [ace-to-six low](#) hand values are common.

California high/low split

Played as above, with a single joker, used as a [bug](#). High hand and low hand (using the [ace-to-five low](#) values) [split](#) the pot. An 8-high or better low is required to win low. If no hand qualifies low, high hand takes the whole pot. Played [cards speak](#), that is, players do not declare whether they intend to win the high or low half of the pot (or both); they simply show their cards and the best hands win. Because ace-to-five low values are used, a hand such as a low straight or flush can win both high and low, called "scooping" or "hogging" the pot.

High/low with declare

This is common in home games but is rarely found in casinos today. Played as are other versions of five-card draw, but after the second betting round and before the showdown, there is

a simultaneous [declaration](#) phase. Each player takes two chips from his stack and takes them under the table, bringing up a closed fist that contains either no chips (indicating that the player intends to win the low half of the pot), one chip (indicating that the player intends to win the high half), or two chips (indicating that he intends to scoop). When everyone has brought up the closed fist, the players all open their hands simultaneously to reveal their choices. If any player shows two chips, and his hand is the best low and the best high, he scoops the pot. Otherwise, half of the pot goes to the player with the highest hand who declared high, and the other half to the player with the lowest hand of those who declared low. There is no qualifying hand to win either high or low, and if no one declares in one direction, the full pot is awarded in the other (for example, if all players declare low, the low hand wins the whole pot rather than half). A player who declares for a scoop must win both ends outright, with no ties. For example, if a player declares scoop, has the lowest hand clearly but ties for high, he wins nothing. The other player with the same high hand wins the high half of the pot and the next-lowest hand wins low (assuming he declared low--if no other player declared low, the high hand who declared high wins the whole pot).

This game can be played with [deuce-to-seven low](#) or [ace-to-six low](#) hand values, but in that case it is nearly impossible to scoop (though you can still win the whole pot if everyone declares the same direction).

Double-draw and Triple-draw

Any game above can be played with two or three draw phases and therefore three or four betting rounds. Double-draw California lowball is a particularly good game. Triple draw lowball, either [ace-to-five](#) or [deuce-to-seven](#), has gained some popularity among serious players. The 2004 [World Series of Poker](#) included a deuce-to-seven triple-draw lowball event.

Four-before

Another variation that can be applied to any game above, but that is especially suited to lowball. On the initial deal, only four cards are dealt to each player. A betting round follows, then each player draws one more card than he discards, completing his hand to five cards. Then the final betting round and showdown. Note that it is impossible to be dealt a "pat" hand, that is, a hand (such as a straight or flush) that is complete before the draw.

Johnson (and "Jacks back")

Played with one joker which acts as a [bug](#). Must be played with antes and no blinds. Each player is dealt five cards. The first betting round begins with the player to the dealer's left, who may check or open with anything. If any player opens, the game continues as traditional five-card draw poker. If the first round is passed out (that is, no one opens), then the player to the dealer's left may now open if he chooses, but the game has switched to California lowball. On the rare occasion that the deal is passed out yet again, players re-ante and deal again. This game plays well head-up (that is, with only two players). When the game is played that a pair of jacks or better is required to open on the first high-hand round, the game is called "Jacks back".

Some examples might help clarify: On the first deal, players ante and Alice deals five cards around. Bob sees that he has a **6-high straight**, which is a very good hand for both high and low. He also wants to be deceptive about the value of his hand, so he checks. Carol opens for \$1, David folds, Alice raises to \$2, and Bob (who now realizes that Carol and Alice want to play high hands) reraises to \$3, which is called by Carol and Alice. Bob announces that he "stands pat" (draws no cards). Carol draws three cards, and Alice draws two. Bob bets \$2, Carol folds, Alice raises, and Bob calls. Bob shows his straight, but Alice has made a full house and wins the pot.

On the second deal, Bob has the same hand: a **6-high straight**, and makes the same play, checking. This time, Carol also checks, as does David, and finally Alice. Now it is Bob's turn again, but now they are playing lowball. He opens for \$1. Carol folds, and David raises to \$2. Alice folds, and Bob reraises to \$3 (a **6-high** is a very good low hand; much better, in fact, than a **6-high straight** would be for high). David calls. Bob stands pat, and David draws one card. Bob bets \$2 (he is required to bet under California lowball rules since he has a hand better than **7-high**), and David calls. Bob shows his **6-5-4-3-2** low, and David shows **7-5-4-3-A** low, and Bob wins with his **6-high**.

Q-Ball

This is a lowball game designed by Michael Wiesenbergs that combines some of the variations mentioned above. It is generally played with three **blinds**--one unit from the dealer, one unit to his left, and two units for the second player to the dealer's left. The deck contains one joker. Each player is dealt three cards, followed by a round of betting beginning with the player immediately after the big blind who may call the big blind, raise, or fold (there is no checking on the first round). Next, each player is dealt a fourth card, followed by a second round of betting starting with the still-active player to the dealer's left. No checking is allowed on this round either, despite the fact that there is no bet facing the first player; the first player must **open** or fold. Each player is then dealt a fifth card, followed by a third betting round beginning on the dealer's left. At this point, checking is allowed. Finally, each player draws as in normal draw poker, followed by a fourth betting round and showdown. **Ace-to-five low** values are used.

Played at **fixed limit**, it is recommended that the betting structure be 1-2-2-4; that is, the second and third betting rounds should allow a bet of twice the amount of the first round, and the final bet should allow four times the amount of the first round.

"Home" games

These are somewhat less-serious games that are typically played only in home games at small stakes. This does not necessarily mean that there is less opportunity for skillful play, just that the games are seen as more social than competitive.

To help grow the betting pot in a home game, one can add a variant known as the "kill card" to the rules. Kill cards work best with stud games or shared card games as no one player can control when the "kill card" is played.

One popular "kill card" game is called Chernobyl Cowboy. The "Chernobyl Cowboy" is the King of Hearts. Whenever the King of Hearts appears face up in a **stud** or shared card game the

game is dead. All bets remain in the pot and the game begins again with a new ante and a new deal. Anyone who has folded is out until the game concludes. For example: In a seven card stud game each player gets two cards down, then four cards up, then one final card down. In a seven card stud game with a "Chernobyl Cowboy", if the King of Hearts comes up during the time the four up cards are dealt, the game is killed and everyone who is still in antes again for a new round.

Shotgun ("Roll 'em out" and "Skinny Minnie")

This is a draw game that plays much like a [stud](#) game. First five cards are dealt to each player, followed by a betting round, and a draw. Now, in place of a second round and showdown, there is a [rollout](#) phase, which begins with the players arranging their five cards in any chosen order, placing them face down in front of themselves. Each player's top card is now revealed, followed by a betting round. Then each player reveals his next card, followed by a betting round. Then a third card is revealed, followed by a betting round, a fourth card, a betting round, and finally a showdown. Players may not change the order of their cards at any time during the rollout phase.

This game can be played for high or low, but plays best at [high-low split](#), in which case it is called "Skinny Minnie".

Spit in the ocean

This might be classified as a hybrid draw/[community card](#) game, but it is placed here because it plays mostly as a draw game. On the initial deal, each player is dealt four cards, and then a single card is dealt to the center of the table face up. This card plays as if it were the fifth card in every player's hand. It is also a wild card, and every other card of its rank is also wild. The first betting round is then played, followed by a draw in which each player replaces cards from his hand with an equal number, so that each player still has only four cards in hand. A final betting round is followed by a showdown. High-hand values are used.

Here's a sample deal: Alice deals four cards to each player, then deals the next card face up to the center of the table. It is the **6** of diamonds, and this makes all **6**-spot cards wild. Bob opens for \$1, Carol raises to \$2, David folds, Alice and Bob call. Bob discards two cards, and receives two replacements. Carol draws one card, and Alice draws one. Bob checks, Carol bets \$2, Alice raises to \$4, Bob folds, Carol reraises to \$6, and Alice calls. The cards in Carol's hand are **Q-Q-6-4**. Because the **6** in her hand and the one on the board are wild, her hand is four queens. Alice's hand contains **K-J-9-7**, all spades. With the shared wild card, this gives her a flush, which loses to Carol's four queens.

Anaconda ("Pass the trash")

Seven cards are dealt to each player. Before the first betting round, each player examines his hand, and removes exactly three cards from his hand and places them on the table to his left. After each person has thus discarded, he picks up the cards discarded by his right-hand neighbor and places them in his hand (thus, each player will have given three cards to his left-hand

neighbor). It is important that each player discard before looking at the cards he is to receive. After the first pass, there is a betting round. Then a second pass occurs, each player passing two cards to his right. A second betting round is followed by a third pass, each player passing one card to his left. Finally, a fourth betting round and a showdown, in which the player with the best five-card high hand he can make out of the seven in his hand wins the pot.

In some casual games, the showdown is replaced by a [rollout](#) phase, as described above in "Shotgun". This makes a total of eight betting rounds in the game, which generally destroys any chance for skillful play in the later rounds.

Ad hoc variants

Any of the above games can be modified in many ways upon player whim, by designating additional wild cards, betting rounds, more or fewer cards, altered hand values, and any other change agreed upon by all players prior to each deal. You can announce such a game by using the name of an existing game and specifying the variations, for example "Three-card Triple-draw California lowball, Kings wild" (a surprisingly good game heads up). Many times this will result in a game that does not play well, but occasionally will produce a game that is well-suited to a particular group of players. Even if it doesn't, such games can be used sparingly to enliven an otherwise serious game.

Here are some general guidelines:

- If you want to designate some normal suited cards as wild, choose cards that would otherwise be bad for the game being played. For example, deuces wild for high-hand games, kings wild for lowball, 9-spots wild for [high-low split](#) (where an 8-high or lower is necessary to win low).
- High-low split games play best with more than four players.
- When playing high-low split, it is necessary to have either a [declaration](#) phase or a qualifier (but not both). The most common form is 8-high or better to qualify low, but also common is any pair/no pair (that is, a pair or better is required to win high, and no pair or better low is required to win low), and 9-high for low.
- Designating more than four wild cards (or possibly six) will result in considerable confusion and many ties.
- Two to five betting rounds makes a good game. One round or more than five rounds reduces the amount of skill involved.
- Giving each player more than eight or nine cards usually makes a bad game. (Note that in Anaconda, each player will have seen up to thirteen cards!)

[Five-card draw](#)

Five-card draw

Five-card draw is often the first [poker variant](#) learned by most players, and is very common in home games although it is now rare in [casino](#) and [tournament](#) play. The [lowball](#) variations

make more interesting games and are more commonly played in casinos. Two to eight players can play.

The descriptions below assume that you are familiar with the general game play of [poker](#), and with [hand values](#). They also make no assumptions about what [betting structure](#) is used. In casino play, it is common to use blinds; the first betting round thus begins with the player to the left of the big blind, and subsequent rounds begin with the player to the dealer's left. In home games, it is typical to use an ante; the first betting round begins with the player to the dealer's left, and the second round begins with the player who opened the first round.

Play begins with each player being dealt five cards, one at a time, all face down. The remaining deck stub is placed aside, often protected by placing a chip or other marker on it. Players pick up the cards and hold them in their hands, being careful to keep them concealed from the other players. The first "before the draw" betting round occurs at this point, starting with the player to the dealer's left (or to the left of the big blind if blinds are used).

If more than one player remains after the first round, the "draw" phase begins. Each player specifies how many of his cards he wishes to replace, and discards that many from his hand. The deck stub is retrieved, and after a [burn card](#) is dealt, each player in turn beginning at the dealer's left is dealt from the stub the same number of cards he discarded, so that each player again has five cards. It is important that each player discards the cards he wishes to replace before he takes any replacements, and that he take the same number of replacements as he discarded.

A second "after the draw" betting round occurs after the draw phase, beginning with the player to the dealers left or else beginning with the player who opened the first round (the latter is common when antes are used instead of blinds). This is followed by a [showdown](#) if more than one player remains, in which the player with the best [hand](#) wins the pot.

A common "house rule" in some places is that a player may not replace more than three cards, unless he draws four cards while keeping an ace (or [wild card](#)). This rule is only needed for low-stakes social games where many players will stay for the draw, and will help avoid depletion of the deck stub. In more serious games such as those played in casinos it is unnecessary and generally not used. A rule that *is* used by many casinos is that a player is not allowed to draw five consecutive cards from the deck stub. In this case, if a player wishes to replace all five of his cards, he is given four of them in turn, the other players are given their draws, and then the dealer returns to that player to give him his fifth replacement (if no later player drew, it is necessary to deal a [burn card](#) first).

Another common house rule is that the bottom card of the deck is never given as a replacement, to avoid the possibility of someone who might have seen it during the deal using that information. If the deck stub is depleted during the draw before all players have received their replacements, the last players can receive cards chosen randomly from among those discarded by previous players. For example, if the last player to draw wants three replacements but there are only two cards remaining in the deck stub, the dealer gives the player the one top card he can give, then shuffles together the bottom card of the deck, the burn card, and the earlier players' discards (but not the player's own discards!), and finally deals two more replacements to the last player.

Sample deal

The sample deal below assumes that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing in the examples; Bob, who is sitting to her left; Carol to his left; and David to Carol's left.

All four players ante \$.25. Alice deals five cards to each player and places the deck stub aside. Bob opens the betting round by betting \$1. Carol folds, David calls, and Alice calls, closing the betting round. Bob now declares that he wishes to replace three of his cards, so he removes those three cards from his hand and discards them. Alice retrieves the deck stub, deals a burn card, then deals three cards directly to Bob, who puts them in his hand. David discards one card, and Alice deals one card to him from the deck stub. Alice now discards three of her own cards, and replaces them with three from the top of the deck stub (Note: in a player-dealt casino game there is often a rule that the dealer must discard before picking up the deck stub, but this is a home game so we won't worry about such details). Now a second betting round begins. Bob checks, David bets \$3, Alice calls, and Bob folds, ending the second betting round. David shows a **flush**, and Alice shows **two pair**, so David takes the pot.

Variations

See also [draw poker](#).

Stud poker

Stud poker is any of a number of [poker variants](#) in which each player receives a mix of face-down and face-up cards dealt in multiple betting rounds. Stud games are also typically *non-positional* games, meaning that the player who bets first on each round may change from round to round (it is usually the player whose face-up cards make the best hand for the game being played). The cards dealt face down to each individual player are called **hole cards** (which gave rise to the common English expression *ace in the hole*, which suggests that one has something valuable that is hidden from view).

[Five-card stud](#) first appeared during the American Civil War, and became very popular. In recent years, [Seven-card stud](#) has become more common, both in [casinos](#) and in home games. These two games form the basis of most modern stud poker variations.

The number of betting rounds in a game influences how well the game plays with different [betting structures](#). Games with four or fewer betting rounds, such as five-card stud and Mississippi stud (described below), play well with any structure, and are especially well suited to [no limit](#) and [pot limit](#) play. Games with more betting rounds are more suited to [fixed limit](#) or [spread limit](#). It is common (and recommended) for later betting rounds to have higher limits than earlier ones. For example, a "\$5/\$10 Seven-card Stud" game in a Nevada casino allows \$5 bets for the first two rounds and \$10 bets for subsequent rounds. Also common is to make the final round even higher: a "\$5/\$10/\$20" game would allow \$20 bets on the last round only. Another common rule is to allow the larger bet on the second round if there is an "open pair" (that is, at least one player's upcards make a pair). Some casinos (typically in California) use the smaller limit on the first three rounds rather than just the first two.

It is a common convention in stud poker to name the betting rounds after the number of cards each player holds when that betting round begins. So the bet that occurs when each player has three cards is called "third card" or "third street", while the bet that occurs when each player has five cards is "fifth street". The final round, regardless of the number of betting rounds, is commonly called the "river" or simply the "end".

The variations described below assume that you are already familiar with [five-card stud](#) and [seven-card stud](#), and with the [game play](#) of [poker](#) in general.

General variations

Some rule variations can be applied to almost any game, and combinations of these variations can be used to create ad-hoc games. These include [roll your own](#), [rollouts](#), [blind stud](#), and [twist](#) rounds.

Any game can also be changed by adding one or more jokers to the deck to act as [wild cards](#), or by designating certain other cards as wild. Some specific common variations include **Low hole card wild**, in which each player's lowest-ranking downcard (and all other cards of that same rank) are wild in that player's hand only, and **Follow the queen**, in which each time a **Q** is dealt face up to anyone, the *next* face up card (and all others of that rank) become wild. The usual practice in the latter case is that if a second **Q** appears among the upcards, the previous wild card loses its status to the new one.

One can also vary any stud game by dealing extra downcards and requiring either that one or more hole cards be discarded at some point in the game or adding a restriction on how many of those hole cards may be played in the final hand. For example, five-card stud can be modified by dealing each player an extra downcard at the start of the game, adding the restriction that each player may only use one of his two downcards in his final hand. This game is called **Crocodile stud**. Likewise, seven-card stud can be modified by dealing each player three downcards instead of two on the first round, but adding the restriction that a player may use no more than two of those cards in his final hand (called **Buffalo stud**; if the extra hole card must be discarded after the first betting round, then it is **Australian stud**). If playing one of these games without the requirement to discard the extra hole card at some time during play, it is recommended as a practical matter to ensure compliance that each player physically discard one hole card immediately before showdown, before revealing the "live" hole cards (so that there can be no confusion about which cards were down).

Variations can be made by eliminating betting rounds, dealing more than one upcard at a time for one or more rounds. For example, Mississippi stud (see below) is basically seven-card stud with the second betting round removed, and the last card dealt face up instead of face down. Further adding an extra hole card as above makes it Murrumbidgee stud.

Games that mix stud-like rounds with community cards are discussed on the [Community card poker](#) page. In general, one can mix upcard rounds with community card rounds in many ways. See in particular Oxford stud on the community card game page.

Specific variants

As mentioned above, [seven-card stud](#) is probably the most common form of the game, with most other games being variants of that, although [five-card stud](#) is also a basic pattern upon which many variations are built. These games are described on their own page. Most of the games described below started as ad-hoc variants, but they have either become popular enough to have a common name, or else have some unique feature to merit including them here.

Six-card stud

Six-card stud is usually played as identical to seven-card stud, except that the last face-up round is removed (Thus it is two down, three up, one down). It can also be played as 1-4-1, where the first betting round occurs after only two cards are dealt (one down and one up). This latter form more closely resembles five-card stud with an extra downcard.

A variation called **Alligator stud** starts with one hole card and one upcard, followed by a first betting round; then *two* upcards are dealt to each player followed by a second betting round; then a fourth upcard and betting round, and finally a fifth upcard and betting round. This game plays well at [no limit](#) and [pot limit](#). The same game, but with each player initially dealt two downcards and one upcard, and restricted to using only one of his downcards in his final hand, is called **Zanetti stud**.

Razz (and London lowball)

Razz is seven-card stud played with [ace-to-five low](#) hand values. It is usually played with a bring-in, paid by the player with the highest-ranking upcard on the initial deal (aces are always low cards in Razz, even for the purpose of assigning the bring-in). On the second and subsequent rounds, the player with the lowest exposed hand starts the betting.

London lowball is seven-card stud played with [ace-to-six low](#) hand values. It is usually played at [pot limit](#) or [no limit](#), and is otherwise identical to Razz.

Here's a sample Razz deal (suits are omitted here because they are never of consequence in Razz; in London lowball, a flush cannot play as a low hand but otherwise they don't generally matter either). Alice deals each player two downcards and then one upcard: Bob's upcard is a **J**, Carol is dealt a **3**, David an **A**, and Alice a **4**. Bob's **J** is the high card (David's **A** is low), so he pays a \$1 bring-in. Carol, David, and Alice all call. Now Bob is dealt a **9**, Carol another **3**, David a **4**, and Alice a **2**. The best low hand showing is now David's **4-A**, just beating Alice's **4-2**. David bets \$1, Alice calls. Bob folds his **J-9**, and Carol calls (her pair of **3**s is the worst hand showing, but there are still many cards to come). Alice now deals Carol an **A**, David a **K**, and herself an **8**. The low hand showing is now Alice's **8-4-2**, so she bets \$2. Carol raises \$2, and David folds. Alice calls, ending the round. Carol is now dealt a **6**, and Alice another **8**. Now the lowest hand showing is Carol's **3-3-6-A**, a pair of **3**s being lower than Alice's pair of **8**s. She bets \$2 and Alice calls. A final downcard is dealt, Carol again best \$2, and Alice calls. Alice reveals that her downcards are **7-J-A**, making her lowest five-card hand an **8-7-4-2-A**. Carol reveals her downcards to be a **4-6-7**, making her lowest five-card hand a **7-6-4-3-A**, which wins the pot.

Eight-or-better high-low stud

Also known as "seven eight" or "stud eight", **eight or better** is the most common form of high-low split stud. Played as seven-card stud, but the pot is split between the player with the highest hand and the player with the lowest hand (using the [ace-to-five low](#) values). An **8-high** hand or lower is required to win low. Betting takes place as if playing standard high-hand stud; that is, low card pays the bring-in, if any, on the first round, and subsequent rounds start the betting with the highest showing poker hand. The showdown is [cards speak](#), that is, there is no [declaration](#) for high and low. Each player may choose a different subset of five cards to play for high and low. For example, a player with **A-A-8-6-6-4-3** can play a high hand of **A-A-6-6-8**, and a low hand of **8-6-4-3-A**. A player with **K-9-8-7-6-5-4** can play a **9-high** straight for his high hand, and **8-7-6-5-4** for low (which is the worst possible qualifying low, but it does qualify). A player with **K-9-8-7-7-6-5** can play the **9-high** straight for high, but cannot play any low hand, because he cannot make an **8-high** or lower. If there is no qualifying low hand, high hand takes the entire pot.

This game plays well with a [bug](#) or two in the deck.

Mississippi stud

Mississippi stud was created to make seven-card stud play better at no limit and pot limit, and is slowly becoming popular for that reason. It is also often played with a betting structure more typical of [Texas hold 'em](#): fixed limit with the last two rounds double the limit of the first two. The bring-in should be less than the first-round limit.

Initial deal as in standard seven-card stud. After the first betting round, two upcards are dealt to each player, so each now has two down and three up (so unlike standard stud there is no betting on "fourth street"). A second betting round is followed by one more upcard and a third betting round. Finally, the last card is dealt face up, so that each player ends with two downcards and five upcards. Because each player has five upcards on the last round, straights, flushes, and full houses count as "high hand exposed" for the purpose of determining who must bet first. After the seventh street bet there is a normal showdown.

Can also be played with [low hands](#), or [high-low split](#). If three downcards are dealt initially instead of two, with the restriction that no more than two of them can be used in the final hand, this variation is called **Murrumbidgee stud**.

Mexican stud

Various forms of [roll your own five-card stud](#), often with a [stripped deck](#) and [wild cards](#), are called **Mexican stud**, Mexican poker, or Stud loco. One such variant played by the Casino San Pablo in northern California has these rules: **8s**, **9s**, and **10s** are stripped from the deck, and a single joker is added (the deck therefore contains 41 cards). The **7-spot** and the **J** become consecutive, so that **5-6-7-J-Q** is a straight. A flush beats a full house (with fewer cards of each suit, they are harder to get). The joker plays as a [bug](#) if it is face up, and fully wild if it is face down. The game is played as five-card stud choose-before roll your own. It is usually played with a very high ante, and the high card on the first round pays the bring-in.

The game of **Shifting sands** is Mexican stud in which each player's hole card (and all others of that rank) are wild for that player only.

Miscellaneous

- Five-card stud played high-low split with an added twist round is called **Option alley** or five-card option. The game **Canadian stud** or **Sökö** is five-card stud with two new hand values added: a four-card straight beats one pair, a four-card flush beats a four-card straight, and two pair beats both of the above.
- The term **English stud** is used ambiguously to refer to several games, including six-card stud played 1-4-1 with a twist (also called six-card option), London lowball, and a seven-card stud game where both sixth street and seventh street are twist rounds.
- In the game of **seven-card flip**, each player is dealt four cards face down, and chooses two of them to turn up. All cards are turned up simultaneously after everyone has chosen. As this point, the game proceeds as if it were standard seven-card stud starting on fourth street.
- **Kentrel**, or "48", is a seven-card stud variation which starts with each player being dealt four downcards. Each player must then discard one, choose one of the remaining three to turn face up (leaving two down and one up as normal), and then proceed as with eight-or-better high-low stud.
- The game of **Chicago** is seven-card stud in which the high hand splits the pot with the player who has the highest-ranking spade "in the hole" (among his downcards). There is also **Little Chicago**, in which the lowest ranking spade in the hole splits the pot; players who play Little Chicago call the high spade variant **Big Chicago**.
- Several different games played only in low-stakes home games are called **Baseball**, and generally involve many wild cards (often 3s and 9s), paying the pot for wild cards, being dealt an extra upcard upon receiving a 4, and many other ad-hoc rules (for example, the appearance of the queen of spades is called a "rainout" and ends the hand). These same rules can be applied to no peek, in which case the game is called "night baseball".
- **Cowpie poker** is played as seven-card stud until after the seventh-street bet. All remaining players then split their hands into a five-card hand and a two-card hand. The five-card hand *must* outrank the two-card hand, and the latter must contain at least one downcard. After the split there is one more betting round and showdown. Upon showdown, the highest five-card hand and the highest two-card hand split the pot. The name of the game is a pun on Pai Gow.
- **Number Nine** is a variant of seven-card stud in which 9s are wild, and any two number cards that add up to 9 may make one wild card, at the player's option. Aces count as 1 for wild card purposes. The player is not obliged to make any wild cards, and can play cards that could make 9s at face value or as wild cards, at his option. Cards used to make wild cards may not figure in the resulting hand twice. The player cannot add three or more cards. Sometimes, 9s themselves are not wild, and wild cards can be made only by addition.

- **Dr Pepper** is a stud variant where 10's, 2's, and 4's are wild (the name comes from one of the original Dr Pepper advertisements of the 1920s: "Drink a Bite to Eat at 10, 2, and 4 o'clock").
- **Draft** (or "socialist poker") is usually a variant of seven-card stud in which the second and subsequent upcard rounds are dealt this way: for each player remaining, one upcard is dealt to the center of the table (not to any specific player). The player with the worst showing hand gets to choose which of them he will take for his next upcard, then the player with the second-worst showing hand chooses his upcard from those left, and so on, until the player who previously had the best showing hand takes the remaining card. Then betting occurs as normal. In seven-card stud, this makes for three "draft" rounds (the first three cards are dealt normally, as is the final downcard).
- **Auction** is a similar variation in which each upcard round (or possibly just those after the first) begins with an "auction" phase. Instead of dealing each player one upcard, the first card is dealt to the center and all players bid on it; the player who bids the highest amount places that amount into the pot, and then has the right to either keep the auction card as his own upcard, or designate another player who is required to take it as his. After the first card is auctioned off and placed, the remaining players are dealt a random upcard as usual, and betting proceeds as usual. This variation is commonly played as high-low split, so it is common for a player to "purchase" a high card to force it upon an opponent seeking low, for example.

See also

- [List of miscellaneous poker variants](#)
[Seven-card stud](#) | [Five-card stud](#) | [Anaconda](#)

Seven-card stud

Seven-card stud is a [poker variant](#). Until the recent increase in popularity of [Texas hold 'em](#), seven-card stud was the most popular poker variant in home games across the United States, and in [casinos](#) in the eastern part of the country. Seven-card stud is also played in western American casinos, but Texas hold 'em is far more popular there. Two to eight players can play.

The descriptions below assume that you are familiar with the general [game play](#) of [poker](#), and with [hand values](#). They also make no assumptions about what [poker betting structure](#) is used. In casino play, it is common to use a small [ante](#) and [bring-in](#). In home games, it is typical to use an ante only.

Quick play overview

Play proceeds as follows ("player" refers only to those who have not folded and are still in the game), with betting rounds in-between.

Betting is clockwise, the player with the highest poker hand showing starts (ie 2-2 beats K-Q).

- 2 cards dealt face down to each player, 1 card dealt face up
- upcard to each player
- upcard to each player
- upcard to each player
- downcard to each player
- showdown

Mnemonic: Two down, four up, one down.

In-depth play rules

The game begins with each player being dealt two cards face down and one card face up. If played with a bring-in, the player with the lowest-ranking upcard pays the bring-in, and betting proceeds after that in normal clockwise order. The bring-in is considered an [open](#), so the next player in turn may not check. If two players have equally ranked low cards, suit may be used to break the tie and assign the bring-in (see [high card by suit](#)). If there is no bring-in, then the first betting round begins with the player showing the highest-ranking upcard, who may check. In this case, suit should not be used to break ties. If two players have the same high upcard, the one first in clockwise rotation from the dealer acts first.

After the first betting round, another upcard is dealt to each player (after a [burn card](#), and starting at the dealer's left as will all subsequent rounds), followed by a second betting round beginning with the player whose upcards make the best poker hand. Since fewer than five cards are face up, this means no straights, flushes, or full houses will count for this purpose. On this and all subsequent betting rounds, the player whose face-up cards make the best poker hand will act first, and may check or bet up to the game's limit.

The second round is followed by a third upcard and betting round, a fourth upcard and betting round, and finally a downcard, a fifth betting round, and [showdown](#) if necessary. Seven-card stud can be summarized therefore as "two down, four up, one down". Upon showdown, each player makes the best five-card poker hand he can out of the seven cards he was dealt.

You may note that seven cards to eight players plus four burn cards makes 60 cards, and there are only 52 in the deck. In most games this is not a problem because several players will have folded in early betting rounds. But there are certainly low-stakes home games where few if any players fold. If this is the case in your game, you may want to limit the game to seven players. If the deck does become exhausted during play, previously-dealt burn cards can be used when only a few cards are needed to complete the deal. If even those are not sufficient, then on the final round instead of dealing a downcard to each player, a single [community card](#) is dealt to the center of the table, and is shared by everyone (that is, each player treats it as his seventh card). Under no circumstances can any discarded card from a folded hand be "recycled" for later use. Unlike draw poker, where no cards are ever seen before showdown, stud poker players use the information they get from face-up cards to make strategic decisions, and so a player who sees a certain card folded is entitled to make decisions knowing that the card will never appear in another opponent's hand.

Sample deal

The sample deal below assumes that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing in the examples; Bob, who is sitting to her left; Carol to his left; and David to Carol's left.

All players ante \$.25. Alice deals each player two downcards and one upcard, beginning with Bob and ending with herself. Bob is dealt the **4S**, Carol the **KD**, David the **4D**, and Alice the **9C**. Because they are playing with a \$1 bring-in, David is required to start the betting with a \$1 bring-in (his **4D** is lower than Bob's **4S** by suit). He had the option to open the betting for more, but he chose to bet only the required \$1. The bring-in sets the current bet amount to \$1, so Alice cannot check. She decides to call. Bob folds, indicating this by turning his upcard face down and discarding his cards. Carol raises to \$3. David folds, and Alice calls.

Alice now deals a second face-up card to each remaining player: Carol is dealt the **JC**, and Alice the **KH**. Alice's two upcards make a poker hand of no pair, **K-9-high**, and Carol has **K-J-high**, so it is Carol's turn to bet. She checks, as does Alice, ending the betting round. Another face up card is dealt: Carol gets the **TH**, ($T = 10$) and Alice gets the **KC**. Alice now has a pair of kings showing, and Carol still has no pair, so Alice bets first. She bets \$5, and Carol calls. On the next round, Carol receives the **TD**, making her upcards **K-J-T-T**. Alice receives the **3S**. Alice's upcards are **9-K-K-3**; the pair of kings is still higher than Carol's pair of tens, so she bets \$5 and Carol calls. Each player now receives a downcard. It is still Alice's turn to bet because the downcard did not change either hand. She checks, Carol bets \$10, and Alice calls.

That closes the last betting round, and both players remain, so there is a showdown. Alice shows her cards: **9H 5D 9C KH KC 3S 5S**. The best five-card poker hand she can play is **K-K-9-9-5**, making **two pair**, kings and nines. Carol shows **QS 2H KD JC TH TD AD**. She can play **A-K-Q-J-T**, making an ace-high **straight**, and so Carol wins the pot.

See [stud poker](#) for many variations.

Five-card stud

Five-card stud is probably the earliest form of [stud poker](#), originating during the American Civil War, but is less commonly played today than [seven-card stud](#) and other games. It is still a popular game in a few locations such as South Africa (where it is played with a [stripped deck](#)).

The description below assumes that you are familiar with the general [game play](#) of poker, and with [hand values](#) (both high and low variations). We also make no assumptions about what [betting structure](#) is used. Unlike seven-card stud, five-card stud plays very well at [no limit](#) and [pot limit](#), though [fixed limit](#) and [spread limit](#) games are still more common (with higher limits in the later betting rounds). It is typical to use a small [ante](#) and a [bring-in](#).

Description of play

Play begins with each player being dealt one card face down, followed by one card face up (beginning as usual with the player to the dealer's left). If played with a bring-in, the player with

the lowest-ranking upcard must pay the bring in, and betting proceeds after that. If two players have equally ranked low cards, [suit rankings](#) may be used to break the tie. If there is no bring-in, then the first betting round begins with the player showing the highest-ranking upcard, who may check. In this case, suit should not be used to break ties; if two players have the same high upcard, the one first in clockwise rotation from the dealer acts first.

After the first betting round is complete, another face-up card is dealt to each player (after a [burn card](#), starting with the player to the dealer's left, as will all subsequent rounds). Betting now begins with the player whose upcards make the best poker hand (since fewer than five cards are face up, this means no straights, flushes, or full houses). On this and subsequent betting rounds, the player to act first may check or bet up to the game's limit. The second betting round is followed by a third upcard to each player and a third betting round, again starting with the player with the best poker hand showing (thus, the first player to act on each round may change). A fourth face-up card and fourth betting round is followed by a showdown, if necessary (it usually won't be--most deals of five-card stud end early when a player bets and gets no calls).

Here's a sample deal. Assume that a game is being played by four players: Alice, who is dealing, Bob, who is sitting to her left, Carol to his left, and David to Carol's left. Alice deals one card face down to each player, followed by one card face up to each player, beginning with Bob and ending with herself. Bob is dealt the **4S**, Carol the **KD**, David the **4D**, and Alice the **9C**. Because they had earlier agreed to play with a \$1 bring-in, David is required to start the betting with a \$1 bring-in (his **4D** is lower than Bob's **4S** by suit). He has the option to open the betting for more, but he chooses to bet only the required \$1. The bring-in sets the current bet amount to \$1, so Alice cannot check. She decides to call. Bob folds, indicating this by turning his upcard face down and discarding his cards. Carol raises to \$3. David folds (forfeiting his bring-in), and Alice calls. Alice now deals a second face-up card to each remaining player: Carol is dealt the **JC**, and Alice the **KH**. Alice's two face-up cards make a poker hand of no pair, **K-9** high, and Carol has **K-J** high, so it is Carol's turn to bet. She checks, as does Alice, ending the betting round. Another face up card is dealt: Carol gets the **3H**, and Alice gets the **KC**. Alice now has a pair of kings showing, and Carol still has no pair, so Alice bets first. She bets \$5, and Carol folds. Alice wins the pot without a showdown.

High-low and other variants

The game can be played with low hand values, in which case the best low hand showing starts each betting round instead of the best high hand showing. Also, the highest-ranking card must pay the bring-in if it is played with a bring-in. If played high-low split, the highest showing hand always acts first.

The fifth and final card is dealt face down in some games. Otherwise play is identical (the player who acted first on round three will therefore act first again on round four since no one's exposed hand has changed). This game is described as "one down, three up, one down" or simply "1-3-1", while traditional five-card stud is called "one down, four up".

See [stud poker](#) for many more variations.

Community card poker

Probably starting about the time of World War II, many modern [poker](#) games used [community cards](#) (also called "shared cards" or "widow cards"), which are cards dealt face up to the center of the table and shared by all players. In these games, each player is dealt privately an incomplete hand ("hole cards"), which is then combined with the community cards to make a complete hand. The set of community cards is called the "board" or the "widow", and may be dealt in a simple line or arranged in a special pattern; rules of each game determine how they may be combined with each player's private hand.

The canonical community card game today is probably [Texas hold 'em](#) (and variants thereof), originating sometime in the 1920s. That game is described in great detail in its own article, while most of the descriptions below are brief and refer to that more detailed article (a few other games merit their own article as well, such as [Omaha hold'em](#)).

In home games, it is typical to use [antes](#), while casinos typically use only [blinds](#) for these games. [Fixed limit](#) games are most common in casinos, while [spread limit](#) games are more common in home games. [No limit](#) and [pot limit](#) games are less common, but some games play particularly well with those structures. As with [stud poker](#), later betting rounds often have a higher limit than earlier betting rounds. Each betting round begins with the player to the dealer's left (when blinds are used, the first round begins with the player after the big blind), so community card games are generally [positional](#) games.

Most community card games do not play well with [lowball](#) hand values, though some do play very well at [high-low split](#), especially with [ace-to-five low](#) values, making it possible to win both halves of a pot. When played high-low split, there is generally a minimum qualifying hand for low (often **8-high**), and it is played [cards speak](#).

Texas hold 'em

For more details on this topic, see [Texas hold 'em](#).

This is the most popular community card game today. Each player is dealt two private cards, after which there is a betting round. Then three community cards are dealt face up (in no particular order or pattern), followed by a second betting round. A fourth community card is followed by a third betting round, a fifth community card and the fourth and final betting round. At showdown, each player plays the best five-card hand he can make using any five cards among the two in his hand and the five on the board.

Texas hold 'em does not play well [high-low split](#) ([Omaha hold'em](#) is probably the best high-low community card game). It plays very well at no limit, and in fact the "main event" of the [World Series of Poker](#), the [tournament](#) generally considered to be the world championship of the game of poker, is the \$10,000 entry no limit Texas hold 'em event.

Pineapple (and Crazy Pineapple, Tahoe)

These are variants of Texas hold 'em in which each player is initially dealt three cards instead of two. In Pineapple, each player then immediately discards one of the three cards he is dealt, and the game proceeds exactly as in Texas hold 'em. In Crazy Pineapple, the players discard their

third card *after* the second betting round, before the fourth community card is dealt. In Tahoe, players keep all three cards through showdown, but may not use all three of them to make a hand—each player may use none, one, or two cards from his hand, combined with those on the board, to make his final five-card hand.

Crazy Pineapple and Tahoe are often played high-low split, and play reasonably well that way, though plain Pineapple does not.

Double-board hold'em

A split-pot variant that can be applied to many games (but that is generally only applied to normal hold'em) is "double-board". For double-board hold'em, two separate five-card boards are dealt, and the high hand using each board takes half of the pot. For example, after the first betting round, three community cards are dealt to each of two separate boards; after the second round, another community card is dealt to each board; and before the final round, a fifth community card is dealt to each board (so there will be in total ten community cards, comprising two separate five-card hold'em boards).

This variant of Texas Hold'em is sometimes called "double-flop hold'em", which is a bit of a misnomer, since there are not just two flops, but also two turns and two rivers.

Omaha hold 'em

For more details on this topic, see [Omaha hold 'em](#).

Another variant of Texas hold 'em that is quite popular and complex is Omaha hold'em. Briefly, each player is dealt four cards to his private hand instead of two. The betting rounds and layout of community cards are identical. At showdown, each player's hand is the best five-card hand he can make from *exactly three* of the five cards on the board, plus *exactly two* of his own cards. Unlike Texas hold 'em, a player cannot play only one of his cards with four of the board, nor can he play the board, nor play three from his hand and two from the board, or any other combination. Each player must play exactly two of his own cards with exactly three of the community cards.

The most popular form of the game is high-low split, called "Omaha/8 or better", or just "Omaha/8". Each player, using the above rules, makes a separate five-card high hand and five-card low hand, and the pot is split between the high and low (which may be the same player). To qualify for low, a player must be able to play an **8-7-6-5-4** or lower. A few casinos play with a **9**-low qualifier instead, but this is rare. This game is generally played at [fixed limit](#).

When high hands only are used, the game is generally called "Omaha high" to avoid ambiguity. This game plays particularly well at [pot limit](#), called "PLO".

Another variant is to deal each player five cards instead of four. The same rules apply for showdown: each player must use two of his cards with three of the community cards.

In the game of "Courcheval", popular in Europe, instead of betting on the initial four cards and then flopping three community cards for the second round, the first community card is dealt before the first betting round, so that each player has four private cards and the single community card on his first bet. Then two more community cards are dealt, and play proceeds exactly as in Omaha.

Manila

One of the most popular games in Australian casinos is a Texas hold 'em variant called "Manila" (also called "Seven-up" in some places). It is played with a [Stripped deck](#) in which all cards below the rank of **7** are removed (leaving 32 cards). Each player is dealt two private cards, and a single community card is dealt face up, followed by the first betting round. Then a second community card is followed by a second round, a third community card and a third round, and fourth community card and a fourth round, and finally a fifth community card, fifth betting round, and showdown. On showdown, unlike Texas hold 'em (and more like Omaha), each player makes the best hand he can from *both* of his hole cards with *exactly three* of the five community cards.

Because of the stripped deck, a flush beats a full house. Also, an ace may *not* be played low for a straight (that is, the hand **A-7-8-9-10** is not a straight in Manila). Manila and its variants are rarely played high-low split (in fact, very few stripped deck games are ever played low).

Common variations involve dealing three cards to each player, one of which can either be discarded at some point (like Pineapple, above), or else held to the end, but maintaining the requirement that each player play exactly two of his own cards with exactly three of the board. The three-card variant is sometimes played with **6s** being restored to the deck, making it 36 cards.

Pinatubo

Because Manila has five betting rounds, it does not play well at no limit or pot limit. This can be easily modified by eliminating the betting round between the second and third community cards. So, each player is dealt two private cards and a single community card is dealt to the board, followed by the first betting round. Then *two* community cards are dealt, followed by a second betting round. Then a fourth community card and third betting round, a fifth and final community card and fourth betting round, followed by a showdown as above.

The three-card variant can be played this way as well (as with Manila, the player must use exactly two of his three hole cards with three of the board cards to make a hand).

"Home" games

Although some of these games (notably Chowaha and Tic tac toe) have been played in formal casino settings, they are generally better suited to less serious low-stakes home games. They also lend themselves to ad-hoc variation, since the games themselves have not been time-tested for balanced play as have many casino games, so making variations is likely to make the game much worse.

East Village

Also known as "Newmyer's Seven Nuts", named for its inventor Chris Newmyer, East Village is a modification / bastardization of Omaha high-low split. Each player is dealt seven hole cards. The player then discards two of these cards, never to be seen again. Then, with 5 hole

cards left in his hand, each player "donates" one of his cards. All the players "donation" cards are kept face down, and the dealer "shuffles" these cards with a scramble. These cards will then make up the three card flop, the one card turn, and the one card river. All betting takes place as in omaha, and the game is played high-low split with the 8-or-better qualifier. Each player plays the best five-card hand he can make from exactly two of his hole cards plus three of the five community cards. This game is best played with seven players (it cannot be played with more). If it is played with two, three, or four players, extra cards must be pulled from the stub to be added to the community cards, so that there are always at least five community cards. Note that there are no "burn cards" used in this game. The best explanation of how to play the game is found at http://www.selfstarterfoundation.com/stealth/newmyerssevenuts_about.html.

Cincinnati

Each player is dealt five hole cards, and then one community card is dealt face up to the table. After a first betting round, a second community card is dealt, followed by a second betting round. This continues until a fifth community card is dealt, followed by a fifth betting round and showdown. Each player plays the best five-card hand he can make from his five hole cards plus the five community cards in any combination. More sane variants are to restrict each player to using exactly two of his hole cards (as in Omaha) or no more than two (as in Pineapple).

Council Bluffs

Council Bluffs (or Co-Blo for short) is Omaha with a twist. Each player still gets dealt their four hole cards then a round of betting occurs and the same rules of Omaha are followed until the show down. At the show down players have the option of using two or three cards from their hand (Omaha you can only use two). This variant always makes a flush possible.

Iron cross

Each player is dealt five hole cards, and then five community cards are dealt one at a time followed by a betting round, exactly as in Cincinnati. But they are dealt in a cross pattern with a center card (dealt last) and four other cards to its left, right, top, and bottom. Each player plays the best five-card poker hand he can make from his five hole cards plus the three cards from either the vertical arm or the horizontal arm of the cross. A common variant is to make the center card wild, or the center card and all of the same rank wild.

One can also make a better game by reducing to four betting rounds: one after the hole cards are dealt but before any community cards are, then another after the left and right cards of the cross are dealt at the same time, a third after the top and bottom cards of the cross are dealt, and a final round after the center card is dealt.

Chowaha

Each player is dealt two hole cards and there is a round of betting as in Texas hold'em. After betting is complete the dealer deals three sets of three communities cards (F1, F2 and F3 in the

diagram below). There is another round of betting and the dealer deals two turn cards (T1 and T2 in the diagram) followed by another round of betting. A single card is dealt (R1 in the diagram) and there is a final round of betting. Each player makes their best hand using both their hole cards plus three from one of the valid boards. There are four valid boards F1-F1-F1-T1-R1, F2-F2-F2-T1-R1, F2-F2-F2-T2-R1 and F3-F3-F3-T2-R1.

F1-F1-F1 \ T1 F2-F2-F2 < > R1 T2 F3-F3-F3 /

Chowaha is often played as a [high-low split](#) game in which case you can use one board for the high hand and another for the low hand.

Chowaha is occasionally played at low limits in casinos (usually in conjunction with B.A.R.G.E) and under must-drink, must-toke conditions.

Tic tac toe

In this game, each player will end up with two private cards, and there will be a board of nine cards arranged in a 3x3 square. Each player will make a five-card hand from a combination of his two cards plus any *consecutive row* of three on the board, either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally (as in Tic-tac-toe). Variations exist in the number of betting rounds based on which community cards are revealed in what order. The simplest is probably to deal each player both hole cards then deal the three cards across the top of the 3x3 array before the first betting round; then deal the three cards across the bottom of the array followed by a second betting round; then deal the two cards on the left and right edge of the middle row, followed by a third round; and finally deal the center community card followed by a fourth betting round and showdown.

Another variation is to deal three or four hole cards to each player, though each player may still only play exactly two of them with any consecutive row of three from the grid.

(Need examples here)

A poker-like beginner's home game is also called "Tic tac toe"; it involves dealing each player two hole cards and then dealing the 3x3 grid face up, followed by a single betting round after which players announce the best hand they can make from their two cards plus any consecutive row, column, or diagonal of the board as above. Hole cards can be redealt several times to the same board of community cards. This is primarily for practice at recognizing and evaluating poker hands.

Lame-brain Pete

Three hole cards are dealt to each player, followed by a first betting round. Then a single community card is dealt, followed by a second betting round. Play continues with a single community card being added to the board followed by a betting round, until there are four community cards, for a total of five betting rounds. Upon showdown, the lowest-ranking card on the board, and all cards of that same rank either on the board or in players' hole cards, play as wild cards (thus, it is not possible to know exactly which cards will be wild until the end, unless a deuce appears on the board earlier than that). Each player makes his best five-card poker hand

from his three hole cards plus the four community cards in any combination, with the low board card wild.

Six-pack

At showdown, each player will have two hole cards, and there will be six community cards on the board arranged in a circle (something like the even-hour marks on a clock). The rounds go like this: each player is dealt two hole cards, followed by the first betting round. Then two of the board cards at opposite sides of the circle (call them 12 o'clock and 6 o'clock) are dealt, followed by a second betting round. Two more opposite community cards are dealt (2 o'clock and 8 o'clock), followed by a third betting round. Finally, the 4 o'clock and 10 o'clock cards are dealt followed by a fourth and final betting round, and showdown.

At showdown, each player makes a hand by combining his two cards with any three consecutive cards of the board. That is, he can use 12, 2, and 4; or 2, 4, and 6; or 6, 8, and 10; etc. So cards dealt to opposite sides of the circle will never appear in the same final hand. With exactly two hole cards, there are only six possible choices for which hand to play. The game can be modified a bit by dealing three hole cards, where each player is required to use exactly two of them plus three consecutive board cards.

Bel-Aire

Each player is dealt four cards. The board holds three rows of cards, the top with four cards, the middle with three, the bottom with two. Each player will use exactly two cards out of their hand and one from each row. There is a round of betting after the hands are dealt and after each row is revealed.

Horseshoes

Each player is dealt two cards. One community card is revealed, then two more community cards are revealed. Lastly, one hole card may be traded for a new card from the deck. Betting rounds occur inbetween cards being dealt. The biggest difference between this game and other poker variants is that the winner of each round is not the one with the highest hand, but with the second-highest hand.

Ad hoc variants

Spit In The Ocean is a stud variant where cards are dealt as normal. However, at any time during the deal one player can call "spit", whereupon the next card is turned face up and played as a community card. (This variant is mentioned in the Ray Stevens song "Shriner's Convention".)

Texas hold 'em

Texas hold 'em (or simply **hold 'em** or **holdem**) is the most popular of the community card [poker](#) games as of 2005. It is the most popular [poker variant](#) played in [casinos](#) in the western United States, and its [no-limit](#) form is used in the main event of the [World Series of Poker](#) (abbreviated WSOP), as seen on ESPN, widely recognized as the world championship of the game.

Although it can theoretically be played by up to 22 players (or 23 if [burn cards](#) are not used), it is generally played with between 2 and 10 people. It is one of the most [positional](#) of all poker variants, since the order of betting is fixed throughout all betting rounds. Holdem is commonly played in the rest of the world as well, but [seven-card stud](#), [Omaha hold 'em](#) and other games may be more popular in some places.

Rules

The descriptions below assume a familiarity with the general [game play](#) of poker, and with [poker hands](#). For a general introduction to these topics, see [Poker](#), [Poker hand](#), [Poker probability](#), and [Poker jargon](#).

Play of the hand

Play begins with each player being dealt two cards face down. These cards are the player's *hole cards*. These are the only cards each player will receive individually, and they will only (possibly) be revealed at the [showdown](#), making Texas holdem a [closed](#) poker game. The hand begins with a "pre-flop" betting round, beginning with the player to the left of the big blind (or the player to the left of the dealer, if no blinds are used) and continuing clockwise. After the pre-flop betting round, the dealer deals a [burn card](#), followed by three face-up [community cards](#) called the [flop](#). The flop is followed by a second betting round. This and all subsequent betting rounds begin with the player to the dealer's left and continue clockwise. After the flop betting round ends, another card is burned, and a single community card called the [turn](#) (or fourth street) is dealt, followed by a third betting round. A final burn card is followed by a single community card called the [river](#) (or fifth street), followed by a fourth betting round and the [showdown](#), if necessary.

See also: [Texas hold 'em hands](#)

Betting structures

In casino play, it is common to use a [fixed limit](#) and two blinds. The limit for the first two rounds of betting is called a *small bet*, while the limit for the third and fourth betting rounds is called a [big bet](#) and is generally double the small bet. The *small blind* is usually equal to half of a small bet, and the *big blind* is equal to a full small bet. (In some cases, the small blind is some other fraction of a small bet, e.g. \$10 is a common small blind when the small bet is \$15; this occurs mainly in brick and mortar rooms where higher-denomination chips are used. The *double-*

blind structure described above is relatively recent; until the 1980s, a single-blind structure was most common.)

Occasionally, the fourth bet is larger still (a *big river bet*), and the big blind is sometimes less than the small bet, in which case it is treated the same way a sub-minimum [bring-in](#) is treated in [stud poker](#). [Antes](#) may be used instead of, or in addition to, blinds; this is especially true in [tournament](#) play. The game also plays very well at the no-limit level, and many tournaments (including the above mentioned World Series championship event) are played with this structure.

In no-limit hold 'em, any player may wager all of the chips that he has on the table at any time. This is known as an "all-in" wager. If another player still in the hand wants to call the all-in bet, but doesn't have enough chips on the table to match the bet, he may call for the amount of chips he has in front of him. The original bettor then takes back the part of his bet that exceeds the amount of the call, unless there is another player also in the hand who calls the bet, in which case a side pot is created between those two players for the amount in excess of that matched by the caller with the fewer chips.

The showdown

If a player bets and all other players fold, then the remaining player is awarded the pot and is not required to show his hole cards. If two or more players remain after the final betting round, a [showdown](#) occurs. On the showdown, each player plays the best five-card hand he can make from the seven cards comprising his two hole cards and the board (the five community cards). A player may use both of his own two hole cards, only one, or none at all, to form his final five-card hand. If the five community cards form the player's best hand, then the player is said to be *playing the board*.

If the best hand is shared by more than one player (e.g. if no player is able to beat the board), then the [pot](#) is [split](#) equally amongst all remaining players. However, it is common for players to have closely-valued, but not identically ranked hands. In particular, [kickers](#) are often needed to break ties. Nevertheless, one must be careful in determining the best hand, because often the board nullifies kickers. (See the second example below.) Straights often split the pot, and multiple flushes may occur. In the case of flushes, the flush is awarded to the player with the highest flush card which completes a flush and beats the board's flush cards. If there is a flush on board, (i.e. if all the board cards are the same suit), then *under cards* in that suit do *not* play, and if no one has a card in the flush suit beating the board, then the pot is split. The sole exception to this rule is the case of a [straight-flush](#).

The best possible hand given the five community cards is referred to as [the nuts](#). The lowest possible nuts is three queens (this occurs with, for example, 2 3 7 8 Q on the board, with no more than two cards of any one suit).

Examples

Sample showdown

Here's a sample showdown:

Board

4C KS 4H 8S 7S

Alice Bob Carol Ted

5D 6D AC 4D AS 9S KH KD

Each player plays the best 5 card hand they can make with the 7 cards available. They have:

Alice **8S 7S 6D 5D 4H** 8-high straight

Bob **4C 4H 4D AC KS** Three 4's, A and K kickers

Carol **AS KS 9S 8S 7S** A-high flush

Ted **KS KH KD 4C 4H** Full house

In this case, Ted's full house is the best hand.

Sample hand

Here's a sample deal involving our four players. The players' individual hands will not be revealed until the showdown, to give a better sense of what happens during play:

Compulsory bets: Alice is the dealer. Bob, to Alice's left, posts a small blind of \$1, and Carol posts a big blind of \$2.

Pre-flop: Alice deals two hole cards face down to each player, beginning with Bob and ending with herself. Ted must act first because he is the first player after the big blind. He cannot check, since the \$2 big blind plays as a bet, so he folds. Alice calls the \$2. Bob adds an additional \$1 to his \$1 small blind to call the \$2 total. Carol's blind is "live" (see [blind](#)), so she has the *option* to raise here, but she checks instead, ending the first betting round.

Flop: Alice now burns a card and deals the flop of three face-up community cards, **9C KC 3H**. On this round, as on all subsequent rounds, the player on the dealer's left begins the betting. In this case it is Bob, who checks. Carol opens for \$2, Ted has already folded and Alice raises another \$2, making the total bet now facing Bob \$4. He calls (puts in \$4, \$2 to match Carol's initial bet and \$2 to match Alice's raise). Carol calls as well, putting in her \$2.

Turn: Alice now burns and deals the turn card face up. It is the **5S**. Bob checks, Carol checks, and Alice checks; the turn has been *checked around*.

River: After burning, Alice deals the final river card, the **9D**, making the final board **9C KC 3H 5S 9D**. Bob bets \$4, Carol calls, and Alice folds (Alice's holding was **AC 7C**; she was hoping the river card would be a club to make her a flush).

Showdown: Bob shows his hand of **QS 9H**, so the best five-card hand he can make is **9C 9D 9H KC QS**, for three 9's, with K and Q kickers. Carol shows her cards of **KS JH**, making her final hand **KC KS 9C 9D JH** for two pair, K's and 9's, with J kicker. Bob wins the showdown and the pot.

Kickers and ranks

Here's another situation that illustrates the importance of breaking ties with kickers and card ranks, as well as the use of the five-card rule. After the turn, the board and players' hole cards are as follows (though none of the players know each other's hole cards):

Board (after the turn)

8S QC 8H 4C

Alice Bob Carol Ted

10C 9C KH QS QH 10D JC 2C

At the moment, Bob is in the lead with a hand of **QS QC 8S 8H KH**, making two pair, Q's and 8's, with K kicker. This just beats Carol's hand of **QH QC 8S 8H 10D** by virtue of his kicker. Both Alice and Ted are hoping the final card is a club, which will make them both a flush, but in that case, Ted would have the higher flush and win the showdown. For example, if the final card was the **7C**, Ted's flush would be Q-J-7-4-2, while Alice's would be Q-10-9-7-4. Alice could still win, though, if the final card were the **JD**, as that would give her a Q-high straight. On this deal, however, the final card was the **AS**, which didn't help either of them. Bob and Carol still each have two pair, but notice what happened: both of them are now entitled to play the final A as their fifth card, making their hands both two pair, Q's and 8's, with A kicker. Bob's K no longer plays, because the A on the board plays as the fifth card in both hands, and a hand is only composed of five cards. They therefore split the pot.

Starting hand terminology and notation

There are $(52 \times 51)/2 = 1,326$ distinct possible combinations of two hole cards from a standard 52-card deck. However, since suits are only relevant for flushes, many of these hands are indistinguishable from the point of view of pre-flop strategy. In fact, considering suits to be equivalent unless both cards are the same suit, there are precisely 169 distinct possible starting hands in holdem. [1]

As an example, although **JH JC** and **JD JS** are distinct combinations of hole cards, they are indistinguishable as starting hands. Any starting hand comprising two jacks is called *pocket jacks* and is denoted JJ. Similarly, any starting hand comprised of two aces is called *pocket aces* and is denoted AA, and any starting hand comprised of two sevens is called *pocket sevens* and is denoted 77. Each of these starting hands is called a *pocket pair*.

The starting hands which are not pocket pairs fall into two classes – the *suited* hands and the *unsuited* hands. An example of a suited hand is **8S 7S**. Any starting hand comprised of an 8 and a 7 of the same suit is called *8-7 suited* and is denoted 87s, where "s" is an abbreviation for "suited". An example of an unsuited hands is **QC 9D**. Any starting hand comprised of a Q and a 9 of different suits is called *queen-nine offsuit* and is denoted Q9 (or sometimes Q9o, where "o" is an abbreviation for "offsuit"). Remember, an "s" always denotes a suited starting hand, while the absence of an "s" always denotes an offsuit starting hand.

In almost all poker writing, the rank of "10" is abbreviated with the letter "T", so that all the ranks can be written with a single character, unless cards are featured pictorially when "10" is often used.

Consecutive cards of the same suit are called *suited connectors*. Many starting hands have colloquial names. A full list would be quite long, but some examples are "American Airlines" or "Pocket Rockets" for AA, "Big Slick" for AK, "Fish Hooks" for JJ, "Dolly Parton" for 95 (a reference to the film "9 to 5") and "Doyle Brunson" for T2 (Brunson won two WSOP bracelets with this hand, which would ordinarily be considered a weak starting hand).

Texas hold'em in popular culture

In 1998, the movie Rounders starring Matt Damon and Edward Norton gave moviegoers a romantic view of poker as a way of life. Texas Hold'em was the main game played during the movie and the no-limit variety was described as the "Cadillac of Poker". There was also a clip of the classic showdown between Johnny Chan and Erik Seidel from the 1988 World Series of Poker incorporated into the film.

CommanderBond.net reports that the centerpiece card game in the next James Bond film, Casino Royale, will be no-limit Texas Hold 'em instead of Baccarat as in the original Ian Fleming novel. ^[2]

Hold 'em as a spectator sport

Hold 'em first caught the public eye as a spectator sport in the United Kingdom with the Late Night Poker TV show in 1999. The popularity of the show led to Phil Hellmuth competing in season 3 of the program and helping to spread the idea of lipstick cameras to an American audience.

In 2003, hold 'em exploded in popularity as a spectator sport in the United States. This was due to several factors, including the introduction of lipstick cameras that allowed the television audience to see the players' hidden cards. ESPN's coverage of the World Series of Poker (WSOP) featured the unexpected victory of Internet player Chris Moneymaker (his real name), an amateur player who gained admission to the tournament by winning a series of online tournaments. Moneymaker's victory initiated a sudden surge of interest in the WSOP, based on the egalitarian idea that anyone -- even a rank novice -- can become a world champion. In 2003, there were 839 entrants in the WSOP Main Event. In 2004, that number tripled. The crowning of the 2004 champion, Greg "Fossilman" Raymer, a patent attorney from Connecticut whose trademark holographic sunglasses have become legendary, further fueled the popularity of the event among amateur (and particularly internet) players. In the 2005 Main Event, an incredible 5,600+ entrants vied for a first prize of \$7,500,000. The winner, Joseph Hachem of Australia, was a semi-professional player. The runner-up, Steve Dannenmann, an amateur from Maryland, opined that he was only "the fourth or fifth best player" in his regular home game.

Two additional hold 'em series debuted in 2003, the "[World Poker Tour](#)" (abbreviated WPT) and "[Celebrity Poker Showdown](#)". All three of these shows are still currently (as of 2005) in production and garner a large and loyal viewership.

With the ability to edit a tournament that may last days into just a few hours, ESPN's World Series of Poker focuses on showing how various star players fared in each event. Key hands from throughout the many days of each event are shown, and similar, highly edited coverage of final tables is also provided.

The World Poker Tour does not offer general coverage of the multi-day poker tournaments. Instead, WPT covers only the action at the final table of each event. With aggressive play and increasing blinds and antes, the important action from a single table can easily be edited into a two hour episode. Although the tournament fate of fewer stars are chronicled this way, it allows the drama to build more naturally toward the final heads up showdown.

Celebrity Poker Showdown coverage is a single table like World Poker Tour, however, the players are invited to participate instead of winning their way on. Because the players are much

less skilled and aggressive, significant editing is often done to trim the action to fit the broadcast time.

Bibliography

- Phil Gordon and Jonathan Grotenstein (2004). Poker: The Real Deal, Simon Spotlight Entertainment. ISBN 0689875908. The poker lifestyle, strategies, and great anecdotes from the tables.
- Lee Jones (1994). Winning Low-Limit Hold-em, Conjelco. ISBN 1886070156. An introduction to lower limit game play.
- David Sklansky (1996). Hold 'em Poker, Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685086.
- Ed Miller, David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth (2004). Small Stakes Hold'em, Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685329. A book discussing all facets of "small stakes games", i.e. games in which many players play too many hands, and too many bad hands, too far.
- David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth (1999). Hold 'em Poker for Advanced Players, Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685221. This book contains a thorough discussion of strategies which apply to middle- and high-limit games involving players who generally play soundly.
- Bob Ciaffone and Jim Brier (2002). Middle Limit Holdem, Bob Ciaffone. ISBN 0966100743.
- David Sklansky (1989). The Theory of Poker, Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685000.

[Texas hold 'em hands](#) | [Probability](#) | [Pre-flop basic strategy](#) | [Post oak bluff](#) | [Poker Superstars Invitational Tournament](#) | [WinHoldEm](#)

Texas hold 'em hands

In the [poker](#) game **Texas hold 'em**, a player's **hand** consists of two *hole cards*, which belong solely to the player and remain hidden from the other players. Five [community cards](#) are also dealt into play. Betting begins before any of the community cards are exposed, and continues throughout the hand.

The player's "playing hand", which will be compared against that of each competing player, is the best 5-card [poker hand](#) available from his two hole cards and the five community cards.

Unless otherwise specified, here the term *hand* applies to the player's two hole cards, or *starting hand*.

Essentials

There are $(52 \times 51)/2 = 1,326$ distinct possible combinations of two hole cards from a standard 52-card deck in hold 'em, but since suits have no relative value in poker, many of these

hands are identical in value before the **flop**. For example, **ACJC** and **AHJH** are identical, because each is a hand consisting of an ace and a jack of the same suit. There are 169 nonequivalent starting hands in hold 'em (13 pocket pairs, $13 \times 12 / 2 = 78$ suited hands and 78 unsuited hands; $13 + 78 + 78 = 13 \times 13 = 169$). These 169 hands are *not* equally likely. Hold 'em hands are sometimes classified as having one of three "shapes":

- *Pairs*, (or "pocket pairs"), which consist of two cards of the same rank (e.g. **9S9C**). One hand in 17 will be a pair, each occurring with individual probability $1/221$ ($P(\text{pair}) = 3/51 = 1/17$).
- *Suited* hands, which contain two cards of the same suit (e.g. **AS6S**). Four hands out of 17 will be suited, and each suited configuration occurs with probability $2/663$ ($P(\text{suited}) = 12/51 = 4/17$).
- *Offsuit* hands, which contain two cards of different suit and rank (e.g. **KSJH**). Twelve out of 17 hands will be nonpair, offsuit hands, each of which occurs with probability $2/221$ ($P(\text{offsuit non-pair}) = 3*(13-1)/51 = 12/17$).

It is typical to abbreviate suited hands in hold 'em by affixing an "s" to the hand, as well as to abbreviate non-suited hands with an "o" (for offsuit). That is,

QQ represents any pair of queens,

AK (or, sometimes, **AKo**) represents any ace and king of different suits, and

JTs represents any jack and ten of the same suit.

Specific hands

Pocket Aces (ASAC)

The most powerful starting hand in hold 'em is **AA**, a pair of aces. This hand is also known as "Bullets", "American Airlines" and "Pocket Rockets". Pocket aces are often played aggressively, for a variety of reasons: First, it is automatically stronger than any starting hand. Second, it is impossible for the flop to bring overcards. Most importantly, however, **AA** plays well in virtually any situation, whether the game is short-handed or a full table, whether many or few players see the flop, and regardless of the style of play (loose/passive, tight/aggressive). For example, **ACAH** is highly profitable, a huge 50.5% favorite to win the pot against the **KSQS**, **7C7H**, and **5D6D** if all 4 players stay in the hand until the river. In this case, the aces would win about 1 out of 2 times, while getting an excellent 1 to 3 return on all bets.

Big Slick (ASKS or ASKC)

The hands **AKs** and **AK** are both known, commonly, as "Big Slick". According to David Sklansky in *Hold 'Em Poker for Advanced Players*, in a full limit game with 8-10 players, the suited ace-king is the fourth-best starting hand; the unsuited is the tenth. This evaluation may change dramatically in other situations. For example, heads up, **AK** (suited or not) is just a slight underdog against a lower pocket pair. **AK** is not a "made" hand, in the sense that, before the flop (unlike a pocket pair), it has not made a pair. Against a small number of opponents, however, it will often be the strongest starting hand, and it will often be able to win the showdown without improvement (that is, without pairing).

The tendency of weaker players to overplay this hand has recently earned it a new nick name: "Anna Kournikova," after the well-known female tennis player who is known for her good looks but whose record as a professional was mediocre. Or, as some commentators put it, "It looks good but never wins."

Pocket Kings (KSKC)

This hand is commonly rated second most powerful opening hand in hold 'em. Often referred to as "Pocket Cowboys", "Men", and "Ace magnets".

Pocket Queens (QCQS)

Commonly known as "Ladies". Occasionally "Girls with curls", "Dykes", "Siegfried and Roy", "Pocket Bitches", "Angels" and "the Hilton Sisters".

Pocket Jacks (JHJS)

Commonly known as "Fishhooks," "Johnnies," or "Jokers". Commonly regarded as the most difficult pocket pair to play as it is a Top 10 premium hand, but degrades rapidly after an unfavorable flop with overcards (e.g., **QH AD 5C**).

Pocket Tens (10C10S)

Commonly known as "Dimes," "Box Cars," or "Tension."

Pocket Nines (9C9S)

Commonly called "Wayne Gretzky" (after his jersey number) and "Get Smart" (after Agent 99 in the television series).

Pocket Eights (8C8S)

Referring to the appearance of the eights, commonly known as "Snowmen" or "Frog Eyes". In No-Limit tournament play, pocket pairs from 8C8S and below are often in "race" situations with two overcards (e.g. **ASQH**). In these situations, players usually have moved all their chips in preflop, meaning that all betting ceases and the community is dealt with pocket cards face-up. The chance of the pocket pair winning the showdown is very close to 50/50, although the pair usually is a slight favorite. Therefore, these race situations are also known as "coin flips."

Pocket Sevens (7S7D)

Again referencing appearance of the sevens, commonly known as "Walking Sticks" or "Hockey Sticks."

Pocket Fives (**5H5D**)

Commonly known as "Speed Limit" (55 miles per hour was the U.S. national speed limit through the 1970s and 1980s), "Nickels", and "Presto".

Pocket Fours (**4H4D**)

Commonly known as "Sailboats" or "Eastwoods", in reference to Dirty Harry's .44 magnum. Also called "Midlife Crisis" at times.

Seven-Deuce (**7S2C**)

Seven-deuce offsuit (**7S2C**), is generally considered to be the worst possible starting hand; it is the lowest-ranking offsuit hand that cannot use both cards in a straight. In some simulations resembling a multi-player game, 72 has been shown to be the worst statistical hand possible. It is a favorite "textbook example" of a terrible starting hand. Other so-called "garbage" hands include the **JC2H**, **9C4D**, and the **10D6S**.

Interestingly, however, the **7S2C**, though perhaps contrary to common perception, has about a 1 in 3 chance against the **ADKS** (The Big Slick) heads up before the flop, or any other two overcards. The chances of the seven or the two pairing in the community, as well as miracle 4-flushing or 4-straighting are about 50 % (as can be seen from the 50-50 model of an underpair vs. two overcards), but the AK of course has the advantage at times when there is no help for either side, or when both sides pair. Countless players will fold the **7S2C** late in a tournament to a big raise, while calling with hands like the **JH10H** and the **KD9D**, which statistically are only slightly better heads up vs. two overcards. However, these hands are more likely to garner a favorable flop, which opens up possibilities for outplaying the opponent.

For more details on the nuances of hold 'em starting hands, please see the [main article](#) on the game.

Nicknames of other starting hands

Nowadays, it is hard to get a starting hand without it having some sort of nickname. Below is a list of starting hands with known aliases. (Please note that some of these names may be deemed offensive and are only listed here for reference purposes).

- **QCQS**

Ladies, Broads, Whores, (and just about any other slang or derogatory term for women), Hilton Sisters, Siegfried & Roy, Swinging Udders, Mop Squeezers, Dykes, Canadian Rockets

- **JHJS**

Fish Hooks, Johnnies

- **THTS**

Dimes, Boxcars, Tension

- **9H9S**

Wayne Gretzky, Get Smart

- 8H8S

Octopuses, Snowmen, Dogballs, Double Infinity

- 7H7S

Sunset Strip, Hockey Sticks, Walking Sticks

- 6H6S

Route 66, Clickety Click (bingo reference)

- 5C5H

Nickels, Speed Limit, Presto

- 4H4S

Mid-life Crisis, Magnum, Sailboats, Luke Skywalker ("May the fours be with you")

- 3H3S

Crabs

- 2H2S

Ducks

(Note: Unless otherwise mentioned, suit does not matter for the following hands)

- AK

Big Slick, Anna Kournikova (Looks pretty but never wins)

- AQ

Walking back to Houston (Due to the tendency of overplaying this hand), Big Chick, Little Slick

- AJ

Ajax, Blackjack, A.J. Foyt

- A8

Dead man's hand

- KQ (Suited)

Marriage

- KQ (Offsuit)

Mixed Marriage, An Affair

- K9

Canine, Dog / Doggie, Fido

- K3

King Crab

- QJ

Maverick

- Q3

Gay Waiter, San Francisco Busboy (a queen with a trey)

- J5

Motown (Jackson 5)

- J4

Flat Tire

- T5

Five and Dime, Woolworth

- T2

Texas Dolly, Doyle Brunson

- 69 (Suited)
- Prom Night, Valentines' Day (if in hearts)
- 69 (Off suit)
- Big Lick, Dinner for Two, Happy Meal (and just about any other reference to the sex act).
- 95
- Dolly Parton
- 92
- Poco
- 72
- Hammer
- 53
- Kansas Turnpike (for I-35), Herbie the love bug
- 52
- James and the Giant Peach, Bomber

The hammer

The hammer

In [Texas Hold'em](#), **The Hammer** refers to a starting hand consisting of a **7-2 offsuit**.

The term "**The Hammer**" is used derisively by most, humorously by some, and affectionately by others.

Those who play tightly or conservatively deride the 7-2 offsuit as a worthless starting hand for [poker](#). It is rarely worth playing at all as it usually cannot win at [showdown](#). It would take an exceptional set of [community cards](#) to make playing this hand profitable.

Those who use the term humorously accede that the 7-2 offsuit is hard to win with, and use the term to accentuate that fact.

Recently, there has been a spate of players, many of them bloggers or their fans, who have begun using the term with affection, and playing **The Hammer** whenever they are dealt it. These players follow a strategy of [bluffing](#) heavily with The Hammer [pre-flop](#), and some even espouse playing the hand to the [river](#) as if you held [Bullets](#). Occasionally, someone will hit that miracle [flop](#) of 7-7-2 and make a [full house](#), giving them all the more incentive to play this hand again.

The term was first coined by the [poker](#) blogger [The Poker Grub](#) who issued a series of challenges to fellow [poker](#) bloggers to successfully play and win with **The Hammer** and post the results on their blogs. It has since become a permanent part of the [poker](#) blogger lexicon and has gained considerable ground in becoming a part of the [poker](#) lexicon at large.

The term is usually written in an emphatic way; the words are almost always capitalized, and occasionally the second word is written with all caps with exclamation points added for emphasis (**The HAMMER!**)

Originally, **the hammer** referred to the last player to act in a given round.

Probability

In [poker](#), the **probability** of many events can be determined by direct calculation. This article gives the probabilities and odds for many commonly occurring events in the game of [Texas holdem](#).

For an understanding of the poker terminology and discussion, the reader may wish to read [poker](#), [poker probability](#), and [texas holdem](#). For an understanding of the mathematical terms, the reader may wish to read probability, binomial coefficient, combination, sample space, and event (probability theory).

Starting hands

The probability of being dealt various starting hands can be explicitly calculated. There are 169 distinct starting hands, corresponding to the 13 ranks for the first card multiplied by the 13 ranks for the second card. Then, as the order of the cards is not significant, the 156 combinations which aren't pairs would be divided by 2. However, since non-pair hole cards can be either suited or non-suited, they are re-multiplied by 2, giving 169.

Here are the probabilities of being dealt various types of starting hands.

| Hand | Probability | Odds |
|--|--------------------|-------------|
| AA (or any specific pair) | .00452 | 220 : 1 |
| AKs, KQs, QJs, or JT | .0121 | 81.875 : 1 |
| AK (or any specific no pair) | .0121 | 81.875 : 1 |
| AA, KK, or QQ | .0136 | 72.67 : 1 |
| AA, KK, QQ, JJ, or TT | .0226 | 43.2 : 1 |
| Suited cards, T or better | .0302 | 32.15 : 1 |
| Suited connectors | .0392 | 24.5 : 1 |
| Connected cards, T or better | .0483 | 19.72 : 1 |
| Any pocket pair | .0588 | 16 : 1 |
| Any 2 cards with rank at least J | .0905 | 10.05 : 1 |
| Any 2 cards with rank at least T | .143 | 5.979 : 1 |
| Connected cards | .157 | 5.375 : 1 |
| Any 2 cards with rank at least 9 | .208 | 3.8 : 1 |
| Suited cards | .235 | 3.25 : 1 |
| Not connected nor suited, at least one 2-9.534 | | 0.87 : 1 |

Probabilities during play

During play - that is, from the flop and onwards - drawing probabilities come down to a question of [outs](#). All situations which have the same number of outs have the same probability of winning. For example, an inside straight draw (eg. 34 67 missing the 5 for a straight), and a full house draw (eg. 66KK drawing for one of the pairs to become three-of-a-kind) are equivalent. Each can be satisfied by four cards - four 5's in the first case, and the other two 6's and other two Kings in the second.

The probabilities of drawing these outs are easily calculated. At the flop there remain 47 unseen cards, so the chance is outs/47. At the turn there are 46 unseen cards so the probability is outs/46. For reference, some of the more common numbers of outs are given here.

| Likely drawing to | Outs | Probability on flop | Probability on turn |
|--------------------------------|------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Straight flush; four of a kind | 1 | 1 in 47.00 | 1 in 46.00 |
| Three of a kind | 2 | 1 in 23.50 | 1 in 23.00 |
| High pair | 3 | 1 in 15.67 | 1 in 15.33 |
| Inside straight | 4 | 1 in 11.75 | 1 in 11.50 |
| Three of a kind or two pair | 5 | 1 in 9.40 | 1 in 9.20 |
| Either pair | 6 | 1 in 7.83 | 1 in 7.67 |
| Full house or four of a kind | 7 | 1 in 6.71 | 1 in 6.57 |
| Open ended straight | 8 | 1 in 5.88 | 1 in 5.75 |
| Flush | 9 | 1 in 5.22 | 1 in 5.75 |
| Inside straight or pair | 12 | 1 in 3.92 | 1 in 3.83 |
| Open ended straight or flush | 15 | 1 in 3.13 | 1 in 3.07 |

Starting hands heads up

It is very useful and interesting to know how 2 starting hands compete against each other heads up before the flop. In other words, we assume that neither hand will fold, and we will see a showdown. This situation occurs quite often in no limit and tournament play. Also, studying these odds helps to demonstrate the concept of domination, which is important in all community card games.

This problem is considerably more complicated than determining the frequency of dealt hands. To see why, note that given both hands, there are 48 remaining unseen cards. Out of these 48 cards, we can choose any 5 to make a board. Thus, there are

$$\binom{48}{5} = 1712304$$

possible boards that may fall. In addition to determining the precise number of boards that give a win to each player, we also must take into account boards which split the pot, and split the number of these boards between the players.

The problem is trivial for computers to solve by brute force; there are many software programs available that will compute the odds in seconds.

For example:

The **unseen cards principle** states that to calculate the probability (from the point of view of a player about to act) that the next card dealt will be among a certain set, he must divide the number of cards in that set by the number of cards he has not seen, regardless of where those cards are. For example, a player playing **Five-card draw** who holds **5-6-7-8-K** wants to discard the **K** hoping to draw a **4** or **9** to complete a **Straight**. He will calculate his probability of success as 8/47: 4 **4**s and 4 **9**s make 8 useful cards, and 52 cards minus the 5 he has already seen make 47. The fact that some of those unseen cards have already been dealt to other players is irrelevant, because he has no information about whether his desired cards are among the stub or

his opponents' hands, and must act based only upon information he does have. In a game among experts, it sometimes is possible to deduce what an opponent is probably holding, and adjust your odds computation. In a [stud poker](#) or [community card poker](#) game, cards that the player has seen because they are dealt face up *are* subtracted from the unseen card count (and from the set of desired cards as well if they are out of play).

Pre-flop basic strategy

[Texas hold 'em](#) is a very complex game. There is no absolute correct way to play before the [flop](#). This page is designed to give beginner players a basic idea of how to play various [Texas hold 'em hands](#) before seeing the [flop](#). In [Texas hold 'em](#) each player is dealt two hole cards. For the two starting cards there are 1326 combinations of rank and suit. However before the flop the suits don't matter except whether or not the two cards are of the same suit. If you only make a distinction between *suited* and *unsuited* cards, there are only 169 distinct starting hands. One way to express the 169 different starting hands in Texas Hold'em is by using a table. In the table below each of the 169 starting hands are equivalent to a single cell in the 13x13 table. The unsuited hands are the hands on the bottom left half. The suited hands are on the upper right half. Each hand can then be assigned a group. Each grouping is a set of starting hands that are played similarly. David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth, co-authors of Hold'em Poker and Advanced Holdem Poker, were the first to apply rankings to the starting 2-card hands, and place them in groupings with advice on how to play those groups. In this example there are 10 groupings.

Starting hand strength by group

Stronger starting hands are identified by a lower number. Hands without a number are the weakest starting hands.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | K | Q | J | T | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| A | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| K | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 7 | | | | | | |
| Q | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 8 | | | | | | | | |
| J | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | | | | | | | | |
| T | 4 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 6 | | | | | | | |
| 9 | 8 | 7 | | | | 3 | 6 | | | | | | |
| 8 | 8 | | | | | 4 | 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | 4 | 6 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | 5 | 8 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | |

Pre-Flop Basic Strategy

- Note: Unsuit on the bottom left, suited on the top right.

Recommended betting strategy by group

Group One

Premium hands that should be raised or re-raised in any position. Raise or call all-in if need be.

Group Two

Raise the blinds and one or two limpers, otherwise call if you are short stacked, or the amount to call does not commit your chip stack.

Group Three

Raise the blinds in late position, limp in early position. Call if short stacked, or if the amount is small.

Group Four

Raise the blinds only in late position, limp only in mid to late position, and call if short stacked.

Group Five

Raise if heads-up, or raise the blinds short handed. Limp in mid to late position. Raise or call if short stacked.

Group Six

Raise the blinds heads-up, or short stacked. Call in the small blind, or limp in late position. Raise or call if short stacked.

Group Seven

Limp in late position, raise the blinds heads-up. Raise or call if short stacked.

Group Eight

Heads-up only. Raise if short-stacked, raise the blinds, or call small amounts if stacks are large.

Bluffs

Raise if heads-up, or raise the blinds, but fold if re-raised.

No Group

Check or fold.

See also

- [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#)
- [Texas hold 'em hands](#)

References

- *David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth (1999). Hold 'em Poker for Advanced Players, Two Plus Two Publications. ISBN 1880685221.*

Post oak bluff

A **post oak bluff** is a small [bet](#) in no-limit [Texas Hold 'Em](#) which is seen as an attempt to steal the [pot](#) in a way that holds little risk for the player making the bet.

A player executing the post oak bluff bets a small amount, relative to the size of the pot, in order to create the impression that he is trying to lure the other player into the pot (as if he had a winning [hand](#)). When successful, the other player(s) fold rather than fall into the perceived trap.

The term itself carries derogatory connotations because the play is often seen as "gutless," to quote Doyle Brunson who popularized the term in his book Super System.

Poker Superstars Invitational Tournament

Poker Superstars Invitational Tournament is a series of no limit [Texas hold 'em poker tournaments](#) to determine who is the greatest superstar of poker. The first season is available on NTSC DVD.

Crew

The first series was hosted by Chris Rose, with support from poker author Michael Konik and poker professional Mark Gregorich. Mark Gregorich left the show at the end of the first season.

The first series grand final was hosted by Matt Vasgersian, with support from poker professional Erick Lindgren. Backstage interviews were conducted by poker player Evelyn Ng.

Structure

Season 1

The tournament was split into two series, with each player's finishing position in the series final determining their starting chip count in the grand final.

Similarly, the finishing position in two preliminary rounds per series determined the starting chip positions of each player in both series finals.

The Grand Final winner received \$1,000,000. The payouts for the other entrants from the \$3,200,000 prize pool were unclear in the broadcast. However, Phil Ivey has said on Full Tilt that he walked away with about \$400,000, and as such broke even.

In the first two rounds of each series players start with 100,000 in chips. Their finish in each of these rounds determined their starting chips for the final round of the series as follows:

Finish

1. 250,000
2. 150,000
3. 112,000
4. 88,000
5. 72,000
6. 56,000
7. 40,000
8. 32,000

Series 1 - Round 1 finish + Round 2 finish = Starting chips for Series 1 Final

Series 2 uses the same format. Finishes in each series final are then used to determine the Grand Final starting chip count as follows:

Finish - Finals

1. 500,000
2. 300,000
3. 224,000
4. 176,000
5. 144,000
6. 112,000
7. 80,000
8. 64,000

Series 1 - Final finish + Series 2 - Final finish = Starting chips for grand finale.

Season 2

Blind Structure

The blinds increased every 12 minutes.

Qualifying Rounds

The structure was changed to a points-based system.

Six players competed in each tournament, with points being allocated as follows:

- Winner: 10 points
- Runner-Up: 7 points
- 3rd place: 5 points
- 4th place: 3 points
- 5th place: 1 point
- 6th place: 0 points

Each player played six preliminary tournaments. At the end of this, the points were tallied and the 16 players with the most points progressed to the next round.

Final 16

The top 16 were then split into 4 pools of players (see above.)

Players in the final 16 started with 25,000 chips for every point earned up to then.

Each pool had two matches, with points being allocated as follows:

- Winner: 10 points
- Runner-Up: 7 points
- 3rd place: 4 points
- 4th place: 0 points

The points were cumulated from those 2 matches, and the players with the highest points then progressed to the quarter-finals.

Quarter-Finals

The quarter-finals saw 2 heats with 4 players in each, again with the top 2 progressing, this time to the semi-finals.

Players in the quarter-finals started with 50,000 chips for every point earned up to then.

Semi-Finals

Both the semi-finals and finals were played in best two out of three heads-up matches.

Time Limit Rule

A time limit was suggested by Barry Greenstein and added to the show. Players had to act on their hand within 30 seconds. If the decision was not made during that period of time, the player at fault was charged one small blind then, and for every 10 seconds thereafter. The collected penalties were added to the next pot. The time limit was criticised by several players, particularly Kathy Liebert, as when facing a raise the clock is already on before players know how much it will cost to call the previous player's raise.

Payouts

The payouts were as follows:

- Elimination Match Winners: \$10,000
- Playoff Match Winners: \$15,000
- Quarterfinal 2nd, 3rd, 4th: \$15,000
- Quarterfinal Winners: \$30,000
- Semi-Final Runner-Ups: \$30,000
- Semi-Final Winners: \$50,000
- Final Runner-Up: \$140,000
- Champion: \$400,000

In total, the prize pool was \$1,210,000. As the entry was \$40,000 per player, this means that an extra \$250,000 was added to the prize pool.

Trivia

General

- The show has been greatly criticised for the lack of European players invited to attend.

Season 1

- Chip Reese suffered an incredible number of **bad beats** throughout the tournament, that amazed both the players and the commentators.
- In the Grand Final, Johnny Chan came back from \$20,000 chips out of \$3,200,000 in play to take second place.
- Gus Hansen eliminated all seven opponents in the Grand Final.
- The \$400,000 entry fee is the highest in poker history.

Season 2

- According to an article by Daniel Negreanu, both he and John Juanda were invited to play in season 2, but backed out as "things got really nutty with the negotiations." Negreanu would later get involved in season 3.

WinHoldEm

WinHoldEm is an online [Texas hold 'em](#) bot, created by Ray Bornert. Bots of this kind are becoming increasingly popular as a way to cheat in online poker play. The bot is loaded, and will play in lieu of a real human, calculating pot odds and making betting decisions based on these calculations. There is no way to accurately estimate the extent to which these bots are used, but some experts say use could be widespread.

It works through installing client software on your machine which interfaces with the poker room, i.e. it is able to read what cards have been dealt, what bets have been made etc. The bots 'intelligence' ends there. Whether the bot wins, or not, depends on the poker ability of the actual person. The poker strategy needs to be programmed by the user, so the bot is only as good as its master.

Some say these bots are only useful at low limit games, and contrary to belief, don't win all the time, as it is difficult to come up with an algorithmic approach to poker. Using these bots is considered cheating by many poker rooms, and grounds for account termination.

Omaha hold 'em

Omaha hold 'em (or **Omaha holdem** or simply **Omaha**) is a [community card poker](#) game ("flop game") similar to [Texas hold 'em](#), where each player is dealt four cards and must make his best hand using exactly two of them, plus exactly three of the five community cards.

In North American casinos, the unadorned term "Omaha" typically refers to the high-low split variant played with fixed limits called "Omaha eight-or-better", while the original game is more commonly known as "Omaha high-only". In Europe, "Omaha" still typically refers to the high version of the game, usually played [pot limit](#) (sometimes abbreviated as "PLO"). Pot-limit and no-limit Omaha eight-or-better can be found in some casinos and online, though no-limit is more rare.

It is often said that Omaha is a game of the 'nuts', i.e. the best possible high or low hand, because it frequently takes "the nuts" to win a showdown.

The basic differences between Omaha and Texas hold 'em are these: first, each player is dealt four cards to his private hand instead of two. The betting rounds and layout of community cards are identical. At showdown, each player's hand is the best five-card hand he can make from *exactly three* of the five cards on the board, plus *exactly two* of his own cards. Unlike Texas hold 'em, a player cannot play only one of his cards with four of the board, nor can he play the board, nor play three from his hand and two from the board, or any other combination. **Each player must play exactly two of his own cards with exactly three of the community cards.**

Some specific things to notice about Omaha hands are:

- As in Texas hold 'em, three or more suited cards on the board makes a flush possible, but unlike that game a player always needs two of that suit in his hand to play a flush. For example, with a board of **KS 9S QS QH 5S**, a player with **AS 2H 4H 5C** *cannot* play a flush using his ace as he could in Texas hold 'em; he

must play two cards from his hand and only three from the board. A player with **2S 3S KD QD** can play the spade flush.

- Two pair on the board does not make a full house for anyone with a single matching card as it does in Texas hold 'em. For example, with a board of **JS JD 9D 5H 9C**, a hand of **AS 2S JH KD** cannot play a full house; he can only use his **A-J** to play **JS JH JD AS 9C**, since must play only three of the board cards. A player with **2C 5C 9S 10S** can use his **9-5** to play the full house **9S 9C 9D 5H 5C**.
- Likewise, with trips on the board, a player must have a pair in his hand to make a full house. For example, with a board of **JS JD AD JH KC**, a player with **AS 2S 3H KD** does not have a full house, he only has three Jacks with an Ace-King kicker, and will lose to a player with only a pair of deuces. This is probably the most frequently misread hand in Omaha. (Naturally, a person with the fourth jack in his hand can make quads because any other card in his hand can act as the fifth card, or "kicker").

Omaha eight-or-better

In high-low split, each player, using these rules, thus makes a separate five-card high hand and five-card ace-to-five low hand (eight-high or lower to qualify), and the pot is split between the high and low (which may be the same player). To qualify for low, a player must be able to play an **8-7-6-5-4** or lower (this is why it is called "eight-or-better", or simply "Omaha/8"). A few casinos play with a 9-low qualifier instead, but this is rare. Each player can play any two of his four hole cards to make his high hand, and any two of his four hole cards to make his low hand.

The brief explanation above belies the complexity of the game, so a number of examples will be useful here to clarify it. The table below shows a five-card board of community cards at the end of play, and then lists for each player the initial private four-card hand dealt to him or her, and the best five-card high hand and low hand each player can play on showdown:

Board: 2S 5C 10H 7D 8C

| Player Hand | High | Low |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Alan AS 4S 5H KC | 5H 5C AS 10H 8C | 7D 5C 4S 2S AS |
| Brenda AH 3H 10S 10C 10S | 10C 10S 10H 8C 7D | 7D 5C 3H 2S AH |
| Chuck 7C 9C JS QS | JS 10H 9C 8C 7D | Cannot qualify |
| Daniel 4H 6H KS KD | 8C 7D 6H 5C 4H | 7D 6H 5C 4H 2S |
| Emily AD 3D 6D 9H | 9H 8C 7D 6D 5C | 7D 5C 3D 2S AD |

In the deal above, Chuck wins the high-hand half of the pot with his **J-high straight**, and Brenda and Emily split the low half (getting a quarter of the pot each) with **7-5-3-2-A**.

Some specific things to notice about Omaha eight-or-better hands are:

- In order for *anyone* to qualify low, there must be at least three cards of differing ranks **8** or below on the board. For example, a board of **K-8-J-7-5** makes low possible (the best low hand would be **A-2**, followed by **A-3, 2-3**, etc.) A board of **K-8-J-8-5**, however, cannot make any qualifying low (the best low hand possible would be **J-8-5-2-A**, which doesn't qualify). Statistically, around 60% of the time a low hand is possible.

- Low hands often tie, and high straights occasionally tie as well. It is possible to win as little as a 14th of a pot (though this is extraordinarily rare). Winning a quarter of the pot is quite common, and is called "getting quartered". One dangerous aspect of playing for the low pot is the concept of 'counterfeiting'. To illustrate, if a player has, for example, **2-3** and two other cards in his hand and the flop is **A-6-7**, that player has flopped the 'nut low'. However, if either a **2** or a **3** hit the board on the turn or the river, the hand is 'counterfeited' and the nut low hand is lost (the player still has a much weaker low hand however). This is why there is significant extra value in possessing the 'protected' nut low. To illustrate this, if the player has **2-3-4** in his hand his low is protected, i.e. if a **2** or **3** hits the board he still has the lowest possible hand. To lose the nut low in this case both a **2** and a **3** would have to hit the board on the turn and the river, an unlikely possibility. For similar reasons it is significantly better to possess the protected nut low draw over the low draw. For example, this could be having **A-2-3** with a flop of **7-8-9-Q**; any low card below **7** on the turn or river gives the player the best low.
- When four or five low cards appear on the board, it can become very difficult to read the low hands properly. For example with a board of **2D 6H AC 5C 8S**, the hand **2H 4S 5S KD** is playing a **6-5-4-2-A** (either his **2-4** with the board's **A-5-6**, or his **4-5** with the board's **A-2-6**--either way makes the same hand). In this situation he is often said to be playing his "live" **4**, that is, his **4**, plus some other low card that matches the board but still makes a low because the one on the board isn't needed. A player with **3S 5S 10H JD** is playing a "live" **3**, for a low of **6-5-3-2-A**, which makes a better low. However, a player with **3C 7D QD QS** can only play **7-5-3-2-A** low; even though he has a "live" **3**, he must play two low cards from his hand, and so he must play his **7-3**, and cannot make a **6-high** low hand.
- Starting hands with three or four cards of one rank are *very* bad. In fact, the worst possible hand in the game is **2S 2C 2H 2D**! Since the only possible combination of two cards from this hand is **2-2**, it is impossible to make low; since no deuce remains to appear on the board, it will be impossible to make three deuces or deuces full, and anyone with any matching card to the board will make a higher pair. Likewise, starting with four cards of one suit makes it *less* likely that you will be able to make a flush. Starting with four disconnected cards and/or from four different suits provides no chances for straights or flushes.
- Computer models have shown that a larger percentage of Omaha starting hands are profitable compared with Texas Holdem. Nevertheless a key skill is in deciding which hands are worth playing with. The strongest possible starting hand is **A-2** suited, **A-3** suited, which has been proven to be the most profitable of all starting combinations. **A-2-3** is also very strong, virtually guaranteeing the low pot (or a share of it) if the subsequent community cards allow a low split. Other strong hands include **A-2** (suited) and **A-3** (suited), although both of these, especially **A-3** (which often achieves the second nut low or just a draw to

one), need considerable care and experience to play well. Another playable starting hand is **2-3** (which mainly relies on an Ace hitting the board) and also **2-3-4** is quite strong. Hands where all the cards held are high (ie **9** or higher) tend to be strong. In this respect picture card pairs have the best chance of hitting the highest ranked set (which often promote to the top ranked full house or even quads) and suited Aces can be useful for giving the player confidence that he has either the nut flush or, at least, a draw to one. High connectors (especially **J-10**) have the best chance of making the nut straight. Hands to avoid tend to contain mainly middle ranked cards, which are of little use for any low splits and which tend to generate lower pairs and sets, weaker flushes and lower straights and can be very expensive.

- Low hand ranks from best to worst: 5432A ('[the wheel](#)'), 6432A, 6532A, 6542A, etc., 87654; see also [ace-to-five low](#)

Variations

Sometimes the high-low split game is played with a **9**-high qualifier instead of **8**-high. It can also be played with five cards dealt to each player instead of four. In that case, the same rules for making a hand apply: exactly two from the player's hand, and exactly three from the board.

In the game of **Courcheval**, popular in Europe, instead of betting on the initial four cards and then flopping three community cards for the second round, the first community card is dealt before the first betting round, so that each player has four private cards and the single community card on his first bet. Then two more community cards are dealt, and play proceeds exactly as in Omaha.

Horseshoes

Horseshoes is a community card [poker](#) game, a variation of limit [Texas Hold'em](#). The goal of the game is to make the second-best [hand](#) at the table. This simple change alters the focus of the game from the statistical probability of getting high hands to watching how other players are doing. In Horseshoes Poker, being close to the high hand *is what counts*.

Play of the hand

The hand begins with a forced blind, starting to the left of the dealer. Two hole cards are dealt, and the first round of betting starts. The dealer deals a burn card, and then reveals one community card, followed by another round of betting. A burn card is dealt, and then two more community cards are dealt. A round of betting ensues, and then each player is given the opportunity to exchange one of their hole cards for a new card from the deck, with a burn card alternating inbetween each. After any exchanging of cards, one final betting round occurs.

Betting structure

The initial forced blind is typically one unit. Like limit hold'em, each betting round can be raised by one additional unit until capped at three raises per betting round. Each round, the minimum bet escalates by one unit. The final betting round can be all-in.

The showdown

If a player bets and all others fold, then that remaining player is awarded the pot and is not required to show their hole cards. On the showdown, each player reveals their cards to one another, and must compose the best five card **hand** they can. The highest-ranking hand loses, and the next highest-ranking hand wins the entire pot. In event of a tie, all tying second-best hands split the pot evenly.

Sample Showdown

Board (after the turn)

AD QS 8S 3C

Alice Bob Carol Danny

10D 3S JH 9C 4S 3D 7D 2D

In this showdown, Carol would take the pot. Alice would have the highest hand, with a pair of 3s and a 10 high. Carol would have the second-highest, winning hand, with a pair of 3s and a 4 high.

Variations

Folding: If at any time, a player wishes to fold, any other player may post the bet for the 'folder' to keep the hand in play. The hand is not shown to the person posting the bet or anyone, until showdown. Every subsequent raise or new bet must also be made on behalf of the folded hand until showdown to keep the hand live. Any player may post a folder's bet at any time. In the event the folded hand that has been kept live by other's bets wins, the player dealt the folded hand wins the pot. In this way, one can 'bluff' a fold.

Counterfeit

In **community card poker**, a player or hand is said to be **counterfeited** when a community card does not change the value of his hand or does so very slightly, but makes it more likely that an opponent will beat it. This occurs primarily in **Omaha hold 'em** hi-lo split and **Texas hold 'em**.

Counterfeiting in Texas Hold 'Em

Say Alice and Bob are playing Texas hold 'em. Alice has **AS 2C** while Bob has **AH KD**, and the **flop (poker)** comes **AC 7S 2D**. Alice holds two pair, aces and twos, while Bob holds just a pair of aces, and thus Alice is ahead.

If the turn card is **7H**, however, each player now has two pair, aces and sevens. Since a hand is five cards, the **kicker (poker)** comes into play. Alice can only play a **2** kicker, while Bob has a

K kicker. Thus the tables have turned, and Bob is far ahead. In fact, only if the river is a **2** can Alice win the pot (the two players would tie if the river were an **A** or a **7**, as each would make a full house).

What has happened is that the board paired, **counterfeiting** Alice's second pair, as her pair of deuces is now essentially irrelevant to the hand, and further, it gives her a terrible kicker. In this sense, the **7** may also be referred to as a **duplicate**.

Counterfeiting in Omaha Hold 'Em

While similar situations can occur in Omaha high or Omaha hi/lo, the more common occurrence of counterfeiting in Omaha is when a person's nut low is counterfeited. As an example, say Alice has **AS 3C JD QD** while Bob holds **AC 2D 9D JS** and Carol holds **9H TH KH AH**. If the flop comes **6H 7H 8H**, Carol has a lock on the high hand with her 10-high **straight flush**, but Alice and Bob are still competing for the low half of the pot. Bob holds a **8-7-6-2-A**, ahead of Alice's **8-7-6-3-A**. In fact, Bob currently holds the nut low hand; no one can have a better low hand.

However, if the turn card is **2C**, Alice and Bob's fortunes have changed. *Alice* now has the nut-low of **7-6-3-2-A**, while Bob must still play the **A-2** from his hand for a low of **8-7-6-2-A**. Bob's only hope of getting any money back is for a **3** on the river, in which case Alice and Bob would tie with a **7-6-3-2-A** low and be *quartered* (winning just one quarter of a pot, which in this case is less than the third of the pot they bet).

On the other hand, on a flop of **8-7-6**, a hand containing **A-2-3** is considered *counterfeit-proof*, because it currently is the nut low (**8-7-6-2-A**), and even if an **A** or a **2** arrives on the turn, it will *remain* the nut low (**7-6-3-2-A**). A player with this type of protection can be bolder in betting, knowing that it would take two bad cards to remove his lock on the low hand. An **A-2-3-4** is even better, as the player is guaranteed the low hand (though he may tie).

Flop

The **flop** in poker refers to the dealing of the first three face-up cards to the **board**, or to those three cards themselves. This occurs in **community card poker** variants, particularly **Texas hold 'em** and **Omaha hold 'em**.

The three cards are dealt simultaneously following the completion of the opening round of **betting**. After the flop, there is a second round of betting - associated with the flop - which is then followed by the deal of a **turn** card.

The three cards are often dealt facedown in a stack and then that whole stack is turned faceup and quickly slid to one side to expose all the cards such that a player cannot be seen to be reacting to one particular card.

It is often considered that the flop is key to a game of **Texas hold 'em**, since by the conclusion of the flop a player will have seen five of the seven cards that will make up his **hand** at the **showdown**. It should be noted that while the flop marks the point at which players have a lot of information about the cards, most of the betting rounds are still to be played out.

See also

[River \(poker\)](#)

Poker tracker

Poker Tracker is a computer program that can be used to retrieve and analyze internet [hold 'em](#) and [omaha poker](#) hands. It can calculate a host of statistics for the players own play and for opponenens. Statistics includes percentage of time the player voluntarily put money into the pot, [aggression factor](#), win rate, total wins or losses and much more. The data can be sorted and filtered in many ways and by the use of third party software it can be used in conjunction with [online poker](#) clients.

Misc. poker games

Some [poker](#) games just don't fit neatly into the categories of [draw poker](#), [stud poker](#), or [community card poker](#), and some have features of more than one of these categories.

Stud Horse poker

Stud Horse poker is mentioned in the California law books as one of the gambling games prohibited in California's card rooms. There is no definition for it under the law, however. It appears not to be [Stud poker](#), which is not prohibited and is offered in several variations in California card rooms.

Oxford stud

Though called "stud", this is a combination stud/community card game that was popular at MIT in the 1960s, in which players receive individual downcards, individual upcards, and community cards. Many variations on this are possible by changing what kinds of cards and how many are dealt in various rounds.

One difficulty with such a combination is deciding the betting order: in stud games, the player with the best upcards showing bets first in each round (except sometimes the first, where the worst upcard is forced to begin the betting with a [Bring-in](#)). In community card games, each betting begins with the same player (because there generally are no upcards), making it more positional. Oxford stud chooses to use the players' individual upcards for determining order, which makes it play more like stud.

First, each player is dealt two downcards and one upcard as in seven-card stud, followed by a first betting round. Like stud, the game is usually played with a [Bring-in](#), the lowest upcard being forced to pay it, and betting follows after that. After the first round is complete, two community cards are dealt to the table, followed by a second betting round, beginning with the player with the highest-ranking incomplete poker hand (as in stud) made from his upcard plus the two

community cards. For example, if one player has a **K** upcard, and a second player has a **7** upcard, and the community cards are **T-7** ($T = 10$), the second player bets first (since he has a pair of **7s**, and the other player only has **K-high**). Then a second upcard is dealt to each player, followed by a third betting round, again beginning with the player who can make the best partial hand with his two upcards and the board. Finally, a third community card is dealt to table, followed by a fourth betting round and showdown. Note that as with Mississippi stud, each player has five cards of his hand exposed at this point (two of his own plus three on the board), so it is possible for a flush or straight to be the high hand for the purpose of first bet. At showdown each player makes the best five-card hand he can from the four cards he is dealt plus the three community cards, in any combination. This game is usually played [High-low split](#).

Billabong (and Shanghai)

Just as Oxford stud is a mixed stud/community card version of [Texas hold 'em](#), Billabong is a mixed version of Manila. Each player is dealt two downcards and one upcard. Low upcard starts the betting with a [Bring-in](#) if you are playing with one, otherwise high card starts the betting. Next, two community cards are dealt, followed by a second betting round, beginning with the player with the best exposed partial poker hand (counting the community cards, as in Oxford stud). Then a third community card is dealt, followed by a third betting round. Finally a fourth community card and fourth betting round and showdown. Each player plays the best five-card hand he can make from the three in his hand plus the four on the board in any combination.

Shanghai is the same game with an extra hole card, but no more than two hole cards play. That is, the game begins with each player being dealt three downcards and one upcard; each player must discard one of his hole cards at some point during the game as determined ahead of time. The most common variation is to discard immediately as in Pineapple; the second most common is to discard just before showdown as in Tahoe.

Guts

Guts is quite different from most other poker games (in fact classifying it as a poker game at all is somewhat questionable). Rather than the customary rounds of betting followed by a single [showdown](#), guts features multiple rounds, each of which consist of the decision to be "in" or "out", and each of which contains a showdown. Only the players who stay "in" participate in the showdown. In the most common version, the player who stays in with the best hand receives the current pot, while all other players who stayed in must match the pot. (For example, if the pot is \$5 and three people stay in, then one player will receive the \$5 pot and two players will be forced to add \$5 each to the pot, thus doubling it.) Then the hand is re-dealt, and all players (even those who were "out" in the last round) can participate again. The game ends when only a single player has the guts to stay "in", and thus the pot is taken without replenishment.

Each player's hand usually consists of a reduced poker hand of either 2 or 3 cards. The cards are ranked as in regular 5-card poker, but in some variations straights and flushes count and in some they do not.

Another variation is for three-card guts. The hands are ranked as follows: Three of a kind, straight flush, straight, flush, pair. Each player receives two cards face down. In turn, each player

declares whether they're in or out. If they're in, they receive their third card face up. The dealer declares last; if no other player has stayed in, then the dealer must have a pair or better to win the pot. Another variation is for the other players to have another chance to declare and challenge the dealer. With this variation, there is no requirement for the dealer's hand; if no one challenges him, the dealer wins.

[Declaring](#) "in" or "out" is similar to declaring high or low in [high-low](#) games. Each player takes a chip, places their hands under the table, and either places the chip in one fist or not. Each player then holds their closed fist above the table, and the players simultaneously open their hands to reveal their decision (a chip represents "in", an empty hand represents "out").

Because the pot can double (or more) each round, the stakes can grow exponentially, and pots of 50 or 100 times the original ante are not unheard of.

There are many variations. Sometimes only the single player with the worst hand (who stayed in) must add to the pot, but they must double the pot rather than match it. In an especially vicious variation, nobody wins the pot unless nobody else stays in. This can degenerate quickly, when one player must add a large amount to the pot, and decides to stay in until he wins it back. Thus the game continues indefinitely, with one player continually adding larger and larger amounts to the pot. The pot may grow so big that no player has enough cash to match it, leading to arguments about how to end the game. (This variation is not recommended when playing among friends. Often this variation is abandoned after the first really big pot leads to conflict.)

One solution to the exponentially growing pots is to cap them at 50x or 100x the ante. That is, if there are 5 players with an ante of \$1, the pot started at \$5. If there were 3 doublings, the pot is now at \$40. Suppose the "cap the pot at \$50" rule were in force. Then, if another doubling occurred, each loser would pay \$40, but the pot would now be at \$50 and the extra \$30 would be set aside as the ante once there's a hand with a winner and no loser.

Blind Man's Bluff

Blind Man's Bluff is a version of poker in which a player sees the cards that would generally be visible to the other players, but does not see his own. It can be played with just one card ("Indian Poker"), as a [community card poker](#) game, or as five-card stud.

See also: [Non-standard poker hands](#)

[Blind man's bluff](#) | [Chicago](#) | [Kuhn poker](#) | [Strip poker](#)

Blind man's bluff

Blind man's bluff is a version of [poker](#) which is unconventional in that each person sees the cards of all players *except his own*.

The standard version (also called **Indian poker**) is simply high card. Each player is dealt one card which he places on his forehead facing outwards, and a round of betting occurs, as players attempt to guess if they have the highest card based on what they see around them.

Other versions (**forehead stud**) are variations on [stud poker](#), in which one or more of the hole cards is hidden from its owner, but shown to all other players, as above.

During its coverage of the 2004 [World Series of Poker](#), ESPN showed a Blind Man's Bluff version of [Texas hold'em](#).

Chicago

The [poker](#) game called **Chicago** is one of the most popular [card games](#) in Sweden today. Relying on the keeping of score instead of the placing of bets, it is suitable even for environments such as schools, where [gambling](#) is often prohibited. The game exists in countless versions, so here a (somewhat arbitrarily chosen) basic game will be followed by a number of possible variations.

Hand scores

The backbone of the game is that each [poker hand](#) has its own point value, as given in this table:

- [One pair](#) - 1 point.
- [Two pair](#) - 2 points.
- [Three of a kind](#) - 3 points.
- [Straight](#) - 4 points.
- [Flush](#) - 5 points.
- [Full House](#) - 6 points.
- [Four of a kind](#) - 7 points (but see Variations below).
- [Straight flush](#) - 8 points (but see Variations below).

Basic rules

Chicago is played with a standard 52-card deck. Each player is dealt five cards. The objective is to reach 52 points.

Exchanges and hand scoring

The players are allowed to exchange any number of their cards. If a player chooses to exchange one card only, he may choose "one up", meaning that he is dealt one card faced up, which he can either accept, or instead take the next card unseen. After the exchanges, the player with the best hand (and only one player) gets points for his hand. Then follows another round of exchanges, but no hand scoring.

The game

Now, the first player begins by playing one card. Ordinary whist rules apply, but the players keep their cards collected by themselves. The player who wins the last trick gets 5 points. Also, the player with the best hand (whether it is the same player or not) gets points for his hand.

Chicago

After the second exchange, any player can choose to play *Chicago*. In this case, he pledges himself to win *all* the tricks of the game. If he does, he is awarded 15 points, but if he fails, the penalty is just as harsh: -15 points.

Variations

- Sometimes, a player given five cards below ten (either inclusive or exclusive) is allowed to replace them before the exchanges begin.
- Some play with 3 exchanges instead of 2. Then of course, scoring for hands will be made after both the first and the second exchange.
- Some do not use the "one up" rule.
- Often, one wants to give higher rewards than 7 or 8 points for **Four of a kind** and **Straight flush** respectively. There are several ways to achieve this, most notably by elevating the player immediately to 52 points, or lowering either all players or one player of the holder's choice to 0 points, or a combination of these. Holding a **Royal flush** usually means immediate victory.
- The confusion is great as to what scores are appointed in the case of *Chicago*. Some will argue that no player will get any points at all besides the +15 or -15, whilst others will allow almost any points. The +5 for the game, however, can never be stacked with the +15 for Chicago.
- Some prescribe that any player with 45 points or more is not allowed to replace any cards.
- Some require that after (and not in the same hand as) a player reaches 52 points, he must win the game once more before he actually wins. This handles the possibility that more than one player reach 52 points in the same hand.

Kuhn poker

Kuhn poker is a simplified form of [poker](#) developed by Dr. Harold W. Kuhn, it is a zero sum two player game. The deck includes only three [playing cards](#), for example a King, Queen, and Jack. One card is dealt to each player, then the first player must bet or pass then the second player may bet or pass. If any player chooses to bet the opposing player must bet as well ("call") in order to stay in the round. After both players pass or bet the player with the highest card wins the [pot](#). Kuhn demonstrated that there are many game theoretic optimal strategies for this game.

References

- H. W. Kuhn, *Simplified Two-Person Poker*; in H. W. Kuhn and A. W. Tucker (editors), *Contributions to the Theory of Games*, volume 1, pages 97-103, Princeton University Press, 1950.

Strip poker

Strip poker is a perennial favorite of adult video game makers. Pictured here is a 1986 Amiga version.

Strip poker is a variant of the [card game](#) of [poker](#), in which the rules require players to remove articles of clothing in response to various events.

Rules

The game can be played based on any variety of poker, with the same number of players, dealing and betting rules, etc. There are a number of ways in which the rules can then be developed into strip poker. For example, at the end of each hand:

- The player with the worst hand must remove a piece of their clothing; or
- The player who loses the most money in that round must remove one; or
- The player with the best hand may remove it from them; or
- The player with the best hand may choose which player must lose an article; or
- All players except the winner of the hand lose an article. Note that this makes for an extremely brief game, unless fully-nude players are required to perform some action when they lose a hand, in which case it may even continue after all players are nude.
- Alternatively, whenever a player runs out of chips, they must trade a piece of clothing for a new (usually fixed) number of chips.
 - If players are then allowed to "buy back" clothing when they have won more chips, this can result in a zero-sum game, where there is no long-term net loss of clothing. (With two people, this will have the consequence that only one of them is missing clothing.) (Note that "buying back" may be disallowed, so that the aggregate nudity is always increasing.)

As a further variant, players who have lost all of their clothing, achieving nudity, must perform sex acts.

Popularity

There are no known professional associations. The U.S. TV show Strip Poker is in fact a general knowledge quiz, albeit one where contestants take (some of) their clothes off; though it involves cards in poker hands, the resemblance to the actual game is distant.

The prefix "strip" can be added on to a game title with a subsequent nudity-inducing adaptation of the rules (examples: strip Candyland, strip chess, strip solitaire).

While a popular subject for pornographic fantasy and video games, genuine research into strip poker as a form of sexuality is lacking. The element of risk and of (mock) coercion fits in with a general sexual approach of domination and submission and/or humiliation.

Strip poker and other sexual games can occur:

- as part of a mature sexual relationship, where the objective is to provide variety alongside intercourse (possibly introducing more adventurous/deviant forms of intercourse)
- as a ritual of courtship (in some circumstances it may be more acceptable for partners to enter intimate situations as part of a game)
- as recreation amongst adults with no intention to move towards sexual intercourse
- as part of a pornographic display (whether as part of prostitution or not) which combines sexual titillation with the normal interest of seeing a game played
- as a party game for youth
- as the basis of television game shows such as *Räsyppokka* (Finland - 2002) and *Strip!* (Germany - 1999)

Strategy

There are several excellent books on poker strategy, and this article will only attempt to deal with the basics that must be mastered by the beginner. A list of articles on the material summarized here appears below.

Hand strength

Once a player has mastered the rank of hands, it is more important to realize their relative strength at a poker table. Approximately half the five-card hands in any given game will be less than a pair of twos, but only about one-fourth of five-card hands in the long run will be better than a pair of Aces. A full house is such a good hand that it is far more likely to be the best hand on the table than a 7 high (the lowest possible hand) is to be the lowest hand at a given table.

One mistake made by many beginners is to bet hands that are unlikely to win in the showdown, hoping that they will eventually improve. In the long run, this is a losing strategy against experienced players. For example, in [draw poker](#), any hand less than a pair should generally be folded at the earliest opportunity. In other games, such as [Texas Hold 'Em](#) where only two cards are dealt before the betting round, unmatched combinations of low cards are unlikely to result in a winning hand.

Improvement and pot odds

Although improvement is possible with virtually every hand, most beginners forget that players with better hands may also improve their hands on the draw, and that in the long run the player with the better hand before a draw is likely to have the better hand after the draw as well. Generally, if you have reason to believe that your opponent has a better hand than you at any given point of a betting round, the appropriate action is to fold. However, if the money in the pot is large compared to the bet required to stay in (the "[pot odds](#)"), a call is possible. This is particularly the case when a player is attempting to fill a straight or flush. However, the approximate odds of filling an outside straight on the next draw is about 6-1, and the odds of similarly filling a flush is about 5-1. As such, calling is not recommended if the money that could be won gives a lesser payout on the bet.

One bet made by beginners that rarely pays off is to fill an "inside straight" - a straight with one of the middle cards missing. The odds against filling such a straight on a single draw are roughly 13-1 against and should not be considered unless the pot odds are particularly good.

Bluffing

Beginners, even talented beginners, see bluffing as a way to "buy" the pot. However, bluffing seldom works against poor players (who tend to overestimate the strength of their hand to begin with) and does not work for long against expert players if a player bluffs too frequently. Although all players should bluff occasionally to make their large bets on good hands look less credible, consistent and constant bluffing generally leads to large losses.

In large games it is difficult to bluff because of the high chance that someone has a good hand. It is also more sensible for your opponents to call than fold if the pot is large unless they are sure their hand is dead. Paying \$10 to call with \$100 in the pot is good value for anyone with more than a 10% chance of winning.

Position play

Generally, players who have to bet first need stronger hands to open the betting than players who bet later. This is because the raw odds of a better hand being on the table increase based on the number of players who have not had the opportunity to bet. For example, in a six-player game of draw poker, it is recommended that a player check in the first betting position unless they have at least a pair of aces. However, the last player to bet (the dealer) may open the betting if no-one else has spoken with as little as a pair of twos. One expert Hold 'Em player recommends folding if you are the first player to the left of the blind unless you have the strength to raise.

See also

[Probability](#) - [Bluffing](#) - [Sandbagging](#) - [Game theory](#) - [Psychology](#) - [Tells](#) - [Pot odds](#) - [Drawing](#) - [Protection](#) - [Value](#) - [Outs](#) - [Starting hands](#) - [Position](#)

Specific games

Texas hold 'em strategy - Omaha strategy - Draw poker strategy - Seven-card stud strategy

[Probability](#) | [Bluffing](#) | [Sandbagging](#) | [Game theory](#) | [Fundamental theorem of poker](#) | [Morton's theorem](#) | [Psychology](#) | [Draw](#) | [Position](#) | [Pot odds](#) | [Protection](#) | [Value](#) | [Bad beat](#)

Probability

In [poker](#), the **probability** of each type of [5 card hand](#) can be computed by calculating the proportion of hands of that type among all possible hands.

Frequency of 5 card poker hands

The following enumerates the frequency of each hand, given all combinations of 5 cards randomly drawn from a full deck of 52, without wild cards. The probability is calculated based on 2,598,960, the total number of 5 card combinations. Here, the probability is the frequency of the hand divided by the total number of 5 card hands, and the odds are defined by $(1/p)$ 1 : 1, where p is the probability. (The frequencies given are exact; the probabilities and odds are approximate.)

| Hand | Frequency | Probability | Odds against |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Straight flush</u> | 40 | 0.00154 % | 64,973 : 1 |
| <u>Four of a kind</u> | 624 | 0.0240 % | 4,164 : 1 |
| <u>Full house</u> | 3,744 | 0.144 % | 693 : 1 |
| <u>Flush</u> | 5,108 | 0.197 % | 508 : 1 |
| <u>Straight</u> | 10,200 | 0.392 % | 254 : 1 |
| <u>Three of a kind</u> | 54,912 | 2.11 % | 46.3 : 1 |
| <u>Two pair</u> | 123,552 | 4.75 % | 20.0 : 1 |
| <u>One pair</u> | 1,098,240 | 42.3 % | 1.37 : 1 |
| <u>No pair</u> | 1,302,540 | 50.1 % | 0.995 : 1 |
| Total | 2,598,960 | 100 % | 0 : 1 |

The [royal flush](#) is included as a straight flush above. By itself, the royal flush can be formed 4 ways (one for each suit), giving it a probability of .000001539077169 and odds of 649,740 : 1.

When ace-low straights and straight flushes are not counted, the probabilities of each are reduced: straights and straight flushes become 9/10 as common as they otherwise would be.

Derivation

The following computations show how the above frequencies were determined. To understand these derivations, the reader should be familiar with the basic properties of the binomial coefficients and their interpretation as the number of ways of choosing elements from a given set. See also: sample space and event (probability theory).

- *Straight flush* -- Each straight flush is uniquely determined by its highest ranking card; and these ranks go from 5 (A-2-3-4-5) up to A (T-J-Q-K-A) in each of the 4 suits. Thus, the total number of straight flushes is:

$$\binom{4}{1} \binom{10}{1} = 40$$

- *Four of a kind* -- Any one of the thirteen ranks can form the four of a kind, leaving $52 - 4 = 48$ possibilities for the final card. Thus, the total number of four-of-a-kinds is:

$$\binom{13}{1} \binom{48}{1} = 624$$

- *Full house* -- The full house comprises a triple (three of a kind) and a pair. The triple can be any one of the thirteen ranks, and any three of the four suits. The pair can be any one of the remaining twelve ranks, and any two of the four suits. Thus, the total number of full houses is:

$$\binom{13}{1} \binom{4}{3} \binom{12}{1} \binom{4}{2} = 3,744$$

- *Flush* -- The flush contains any five of the thirteen ranks, all of which belong to one of the four suits, minus the 40 straight flushes. Thus, the total number of flushes is:

$$\binom{4}{1} \binom{13}{5} - 40 = 5,108$$

- *Straight* -- The straight consists of any one of the ten possible sequences of five consecutive cards, from 5-4-3-2-A to A-K-Q-J-T. Each of these five cards can have any one of the four suits. Finally, as with the flush, the 40 straight flushes must be excluded, giving:

$$\binom{10}{1} \binom{4}{1}^5 - 40 = 10,200$$

- *Three of a kind* -- Any of the thirteen ranks can form the three of a kind, which can contain any three of the four suits. The other cards can have any two of the remaining twelve ranks, and each can have any one of the four suits. Thus, the total number of three-of-a-kinds is:

$$\binom{13}{1} \binom{4}{3} \binom{12}{2} \binom{4}{1}^2 = 54,912$$

- *Two pair* -- The pairs can have any two of the thirteen ranks, and each pair can have two of the four suits. The final card can have any one of the eleven remaining ranks, and any suit. Thus, the total number of two-pairs is:

$$\binom{13}{2} \binom{4}{2}^2 \binom{11}{1} \binom{4}{1} = 123,552$$

- *Pair* -- The pair can have any one of the thirteen ranks, and any two of the four suits. The remaining three cards can have any three of the remaining twelve ranks, and each can have any of the four suits. Thus, the total number of pair hands is:

$$\binom{13}{1} \binom{4}{2} \binom{12}{3} \binom{4}{1}^3 = 1,098,240$$

- *No pair* -- A no-pair hand contains five of the thirteen ranks, discounting the ten possible straights, and each card can have any of the four suits, discounting the four possible flushes. Alternatively, a no-pair hand is any hand that does not fall into one of the above categories; that is, any way to choose five out of 52

cards, discounting all of the above hands. Thus, the total number of no-pair hands is:

$$\left[\binom{13}{5} - 10 \right] (4^5 - 4) = \binom{52}{5} - 1,296,420 = 1,302,540$$

Frequency of 7 card poker hands

In some popular variations of poker, a player uses the best five-card poker hand out of seven cards. The frequencies, probabilities, and odds are calculated as above; however the total numbers are greater since there are 133,784,560 (over 50 times more) 7 card combinations. It is notable that the probability of a no-pair hand is *less* than the probability of a one-pair or two-pair hand. (The frequencies given are exact; the probabilities and odds are approximate.)

| Hand | Frequency | Probability | Odds against |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Straight flush</u> | 41,584 | 0.03108 % | 3,216 : 1 |
| <u>Four of a kind</u> | 224,848 | 0.1681 % | 594 : 1 |
| <u>Full house</u> | 3,473,184 | 2.60 % | 37.5 : 1 |
| <u>Flush</u> | 4,047,644 | 3.03 % | 32.1 : 1 |
| <u>Straight</u> | 6,180,020 | 4.62 % | 20.6 : 1 |
| <u>Three of a kind</u> | 6,461,620 | 4.83 % | 19.7 : 1 |
| <u>Two pair</u> | 31,433,400 | 23.5 % | 3.26 : 1 |
| <u>One pair</u> | 58,627,800 | 43.8 % | 1.28 : 1 |
| <u>No pair</u> | 23,294,460 | 17.4 % | 4.74 : 1 |
| Total | 133,784,560 | 100 % | 0 : 1 |

See also

- [Poker probability \(Texas hold 'em\)](#)

Bluffing

In [poker](#), to **bluff** is to bet or raise with an inferior hand, or with a hand believed to be inferior. The term is also used as a noun: a **bluff** is the act of bluffing.

The bluff is an important part of the [strategy](#) of any poker game, though it will come into play more in some games than in others. This is because a bluff is intended to represent a strong hand. For example, bluffs are much stronger in pot-limit and no-limit games, because your opponent will have worse [pot odds](#), in addition to the threat of larger bets in future betting rounds if there are any. On the other hand, bluffing is less common in limit [Omaha](#), because it's often likely that if you don't have the hand you represent, one of your opponents does.

Strategy

Do not be predictable. If you always bluff in certain situations, your opponents will figure this out and start calling more. On the other hand, if you never bluff, they will figure that out too and stop calling your non-bluff bets, which is a bad thing—even though you might win the hand, you will fail to win the amount of their call. The exact ideal bluffing frequency in each game situation is a complicated exercise in [game theory](#) that you will not be able to solve at the table, so you may have to rely on rules of thumb, prior analysis, experience, and intuition.

General guidelines

- Bluffs are more successful with fewer people in the pot. Against only one or two opponents, your chances are often good that no one has a hand good enough to call. Against three or more opponents, at least one of them probably does, so bluffing is unlikely to succeed.
- Bluff much less in [high-low split](#) games—some very weak hands will call hoping for half the pot, and the likelihood of splitting the pot greatly reduces your pot odds in any case. In some games such as limit [Omaha](#) high-low, you would not be giving up much advantage if you never bluffed at all.
- In games with many betting rounds, bluffs are more often successful in early rounds rather than late ones. Once other players have put a lot of money into the pot, they are less likely to give up (this tendency is based on the false concept of being "pot-committed" and goes beyond the correct strategy of calling more often with higher pot odds. cf. sunk cost fallacy)
- [Value](#) bet your strong hands, consider bluffing with hands you are almost sure cannot win any other way, and check the ones in between: On the last betting round, if you have a hand that might be good but that is not very strong, you are probably better off checking and then calling a bet by your opponent rather than bluffing. A player with a worse hand will probably not call if you bet, but a check might induce your opponent to bluff, allowing your call to win more money. On the other hand, a player with a better hand than yours will almost certainly call, and may raise, costing you money. You also do not need the protection of a bet.

- A raise, and especially a [check-raise](#), as a bluff is more psychologically intimidating than just opening. Of course it also risks more of your money and makes the pot bigger (and therefore more likely to be called), so it must be used with care.

Semi-bluffs

In games with multiple betting rounds, to bluff on one round with an inferior or drawing hand that might become a much better one by chance in a later round is often called a **semi-bluff**. Semi-bluffs thus afford a player two opportunities to win the pot: everyone may fold, or the player still might win the showdown if called.

For example, a player in a [stud poker](#) game with four spade-suited cards showing (but none among their downcards) on the penultimate round might raise, hoping that others believe they have a flush even though they do not. If their bluff fails and they are called, they still might be dealt a spade on the final card and win the showdown (or they might be dealt another non-spade and try their bluff again, in which case it is a *pure bluff* or *stone-cold bluff* on the final round rather than a semi-bluff).

Randomizing devices

In performing bluffs, it often helps to have a randomizing device: for example, if your analysis or experience leads you to believe that you should bluff half of the time in a certain situation, use a device such as the color of the last card dealt. Another strategy useful in short-handed games is to give yourself *fake outs*: if a jack is not a scare card, pretend that every jack is an out for you, even if it is not. This strategy has a mathematical basis in [game theory](#).

Bluff (the game)

Bluff is an ancient predecessor of poker played in the 1800s, where only the cards from 10 to Ace were used, and straights and flushes hadn't been invented yet.

Sandbagging

Sandbagging (also called **slow play**) is deceptive play in [poker](#) that is roughly the opposite of [bluffing](#): betting weakly with a strong holding rather than betting strongly with a weak one. The [check-raise](#) is one such play.

This might involve a check or call with a hand that you might otherwise raise with, to lure other players into the pot who might fold to a raise, or to lure them into betting more strongly than they would if you had bet or raised. This is often dangerous because it sacrifices the [protection](#) that a bet or raise would give you, and it also risks losing the pot-building value of a bet if your opponents also check. It can nonetheless be profitable to do this under circumstances that include the following:

- Your hand is so strong that protection isn't needed.
- An opponent is likely to bet when you don't.
- Opponents are likely to fold or just call if you bet.

Here's an example from a four-handed [draw poker](#) game among Alice, Bob, Carol, and David: After [anteing](#), Alice looks at her hand to find a pair of aces, and opens the betting for \$2. Bob raises an additional \$2, bringing the bet to \$4. Carol folds. David calls the \$4, and Alice puts in an additional \$2 to match the raise. Drawing three cards, she receives another ace, and a pair of fives. Since her aces-full is almost certain to be unbeatable, it does not need the protection of a bet (and this is the last betting round, where protection applies less anyway). Also, Bob earlier raised, and David called a raise, so they likely have strong hands and one of them will bet if Alice doesn't. Finally, since Bob and David earlier showed strength, and they know that Alice knows this, Alice betting into them would be seen as a bold move likely to scare one or both of them off, especially if they weren't as strong as they seem. This is a perfect place for a check-raise. Alice checks. As she hoped, Bob bets \$2. David thinks for a minute, then calls the \$2. Alice now springs the trap and raises \$2. Bob calls the additional \$2, and David (who now realizes that he is probably beaten) folds. Bob reveals three sixes, and surrenders the pot to Alice. If Alice had just bet her hand on the second round, it is likely that Bob would just have called and David may or may not have called, earning Alice \$2 to \$4 on the second round. But with the check-raise play, she earned \$6.

Even in games (such as California lowball) where the check-raise is not allowed, one can make other sandbagging plays such as just calling ("flat calling") instead of raising with a very strong hand and then later raising.

In games with many betting rounds, such as [stud poker](#) and [community card poker](#) games, one can make multiple-round sandbagging plays. Let's say, for example, you are playing [Seven-card stud](#) and your first three cards are all fours. An opponent with a king showing bets first, and you raise, getting two callers. On the next round, the first bettor catches another king, and you miraculously catch the last four. You suspect he has two pair or three kings, and he suspects that you have two pair or three fours (four of a kind is so unlikely that he will probably ignore the possibility, just as you can probably ignore the possibility that he has four kings). He bets again, and you just call. You should probably just call for next round or two, and maybe even check if no one bets, rather than raising, for several reasons. Your hand is so strong that the chance of getting beaten is negligible, so you don't need protection. If the bettor just has two pair and you act strongly, he may think you have three fours and fold if he doesn't improve. Allowing other players to continue for smaller stakes might allow one of them to catch a hand such as a straight, flush, or full house that will call your final bets or possibly even raise you back, building a very big pot. Finally, keeping as many players in the game as possible will make a bigger pot. At some point, though, you will have to "come out of the woodwork" and bet strongly; after all, the point of the exercise is to get more money in the pot, and you can't do that by continuing to check on every round.

Another common sandbagging play that occurs only on the last betting round is called "fishing for the overcall". This occurs when the last card you are dealt makes you a very strong hand, a player in front of you bets, and there are more players to act behind you. While you might normally raise with your hand, just calling may encourage the players behind you to overcall when they would have folded to a raise. This play is best when there are several players

behind you, and they are the kind of player likely to call one bet but not a raise. If there is only one player behind you, for example, then getting the overcall gains no more money than raising and having the initial bettor call (at least in a [fixed limit](#) game). This play also sacrifices the profit you might have made from players who would have overcalled even the raise.

[Check-raise](#)

Check-raise

A **check-raise** in [poker](#) is a common deceptive play in which a player checks early in a betting round, hoping someone else will open. The player who checked then [raises](#) in the same round.

This might be done, for example, when the first player believes that an opponent has an inferior hand and will not call a direct bet, but that he may attempt to [bluff](#), allowing the first player to win more money than he would by betting straightforwardly.

Of course, if no other player chooses to open, the betting will be *checked around* and the play will fail.

While it is an important part of poker strategy, in some home games and certain small-stakes [casino](#) games, this play is not allowed. It is also frequently not allowed in the game of California lowball.

See also: [sandbagging](#)

Game theory

Game theory is a branch of applied mathematics that studies strategic situations where players choose different actions in an attempt to maximize their returns. First developed as a tool for understanding economic behavior, game theory is now used in many diverse academic fields, ranging from biology to philosophy. Game theory saw substantial growth during the Cold War because of its application to military strategy, most notably to the concept of mutually assured destruction. Beginning in the 1970s, game theory has been applied to animal behavior, including species' development by natural selection. Because of interesting games like the Prisoner's dilemma, where mutual self-interest hurts everyone, game theory has been used in ethics and philosophy. Finally, game theory has recently drawn attention from computer scientists because of its use in artificial intelligence and cybernetics.

In addition to its academic interest, game theory has received attention in popular culture. An important figure in game theory, John Nash was the subject of the 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind*. Several game shows have adopted game theoretic situations, including *Friend or Foe* and *Deal or No Deal*.^[1]

Although similar to decision theory, game theory studies decisions that are made in an environment where various players interact. In other words, game theory studies choice of

optimal behavior when costs and benefits of each option are not fixed, but depend upon the choices of other individuals.

Representation of games

The games studied by game theory are well-defined mathematical objects. A game consists of a set of players, a set of moves (or strategies) available to those players, and a specification of payoffs for each combination of strategies. There are two ways of representing games that are common in the literature.

Normal form

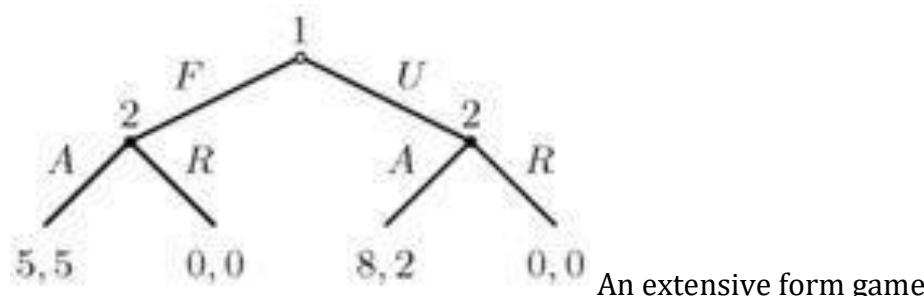
| | <i>Player 2 chooses left</i> | <i>Player 2 chooses right</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Player 1 chooses top</i> | 4, 3 | -1, -1 |
| <i>Player 1 chooses bottom</i> | 0, 0 | 3, 4 |

A normal form game

The normal (or strategic form) game is a matrix which shows the players, strategies, and payoffs (see the example to the right). Here there are two players; one chooses the row and the other chooses the column. Each player has two strategies, which are specified by the number of rows and the number of columns. The payoffs are provided in the interior. The first number is the payoff received by the row player (*Player 1* in our example); the second is the payoff for the column player (*Player 2* in our example). Suppose that *Player 1* plays top and that *Player 2* plays left. Then *Player 1* gets 4, and *Player 2* gets 3.

When a game is presented in normal form, it is presumed that each player acts simultaneously or, at least, without knowing the actions of the other. If players have some information about the choices of other players, the game is usually presented in extensive form.

Extensive form



Extensive form games attempt to capture games with some important order. Games here are presented as trees (as pictured to the left). Here each vertex (or node) represents a point of choice for a player. The player is specified by a number listed by the vertex. The lines out of the vertex represent a possible action for that player. The payoffs are specified at the bottom of the tree.

In the game pictured here, there are two players. *Player 1* moves first and chooses either *F* or *U*. *Player 2* sees *Player 1*'s move and then chooses *A* or *R*. Suppose that *Player 1* chooses *U* and then *Player 2* chooses *A*, then *Player 1* gets 8 and *Player 2* gets 2.

Extensive form games can also capture simultaneous-move games as well. Either a dotted line or circle is drawn around two different vertices to represent them as being part of the same information set (i.e., the players do not know at which point they are).

Types of games

Symmetric and asymmetric

An asymmetric game

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| <i>E</i> | <i>F</i> |
| <i>E</i> 1, 20, 0 | |
| <i>F</i> 0, 01, 2 | |

A symmetric game is a game where the payoffs for playing a particular strategy depend only on the other strategies employed, not on who is playing them. If the identities of the players can be changed without changing the payoff to the strategies, then a game is symmetric. Many of the commonly studied 2x2 games are symmetric. The standard representations of Chicken, the Prisoner's Dilemma, and the Stag hunt are all symmetric games.^[2]

Most commonly studied asymmetric games are games where there are not identical strategy sets for both players. For instance, the Ultimatum game and similar the Dictator game have different strategies for each player. It is possible, however, for a game to have identical strategies for both players, yet be asymmetric. For example, the game pictured to the right is asymmetric despite having identical strategy sets for both players.

Zero sum and non-zero sum

A Zero-Sum Game

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| <i>A</i> | <i>B</i> |
| <i>A</i> 2, -2 -1, 1 | |
| <i>B</i> -1, 13, -3 | |

In zero-sum games the total benefit to all players in the game, for every combination of strategies, always adds to zero (or more informally put, a player benefits only at the expense of others). [Poker](#) exemplifies a zero-sum game, because one wins exactly the amount one's opponents lose. Other zero sum games include Matching pennies and most classical board games

including Go and Chess. Many games studied by game theorists (including the famous Prisoner's Dilemma) are non-zero-sum games, because some outcomes have net results greater or less than zero. Informally, in non-zero-sum games, a gain by one player does not necessarily correspond with a loss by another.

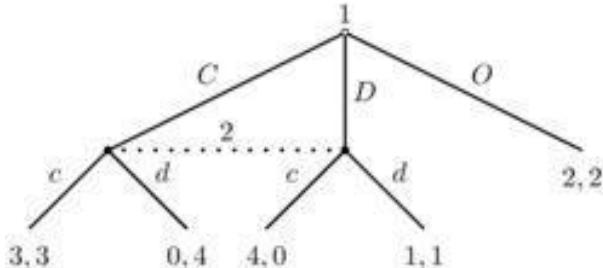
It is possible to transform any game into a zero-sum game by adding an additional dummy player (often called "the board"), whose losses compensate the players' net winnings.

Simultaneous and sequential

Simultaneous games are games where both players move simultaneously, or if they do not move simultaneously, the later players are unaware of the earlier players' actions (making them *effectively* simultaneous). Sequential games (or dynamic games) are games where later players have some knowledge about earlier actions. This need not be perfect knowledge about every action of earlier players; it might be very little information. For instance, a player may know that an earlier player did not perform one particular action, while she does not know which of the other available actions the first player actually performed.

The difference between simultaneous and sequential games is captured in the different representations discussed above. Normal form is used to represent simultaneous games, and extensive form is used to represent sequential ones.

Perfect information and imperfect information



A game of imperfect information (the dotted line represents ignorance on the part of player 2)

An important subset of sequential games consists of games of perfect information. A game is one of perfect information if all players know the moves previously made by all other players. Thus, only sequential games can be games of perfect information, since in simultaneous games not every player knows the actions of the others. Most games studied in game theory are imperfect information games, although some interesting games are games of perfect information, including the Ultimatum Game and Centipede Game. Many popular games are games of perfect information including Chess, Go, and Mancala.

Perfect information is often confused with complete information, which is a similar concept. Complete information requires that every player know the strategies and payoffs of the other players but not necessarily the actions.

Infinitely long games

For obvious reasons, games as studied by economists and real-world game players are generally finished in a finite number of moves. Pure mathematicians are not so constrained, and set theorists in particular study games that last for infinitely many moves, with the winner (or other payoff) not known until *after* all those moves are completed.

The focus of attention is usually not so much on what is the best way to play such a game, but simply on whether one or the other player has a winning strategy. (It can be proved, using the axiom of choice, that there are games—even with perfect information, and where the only outcomes are "win" or "lose"—for which *neither* player has a winning strategy.) The existence of such strategies, for cleverly designed games, has important consequences in descriptive set theory.

Uses of game theory

Games in one form or another are widely used in many different academic disciplines.

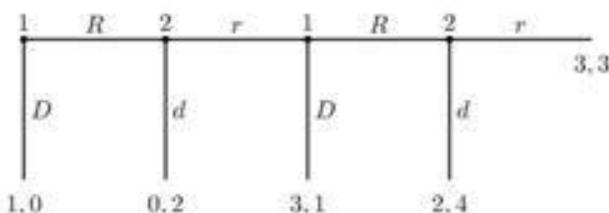
Economics and business

Economists have used game theory to analyze a wide array of economic phenomena, including auctions, bargaining, duopolies and oligopolies, social network formation, and voting systems. This research usually focuses on particular sets of strategies known as equilibria in games. These "solution concepts" are usually based on what is required by norms of rationality. The most famous of these is the Nash equilibrium. A set of strategies is a Nash equilibrium if each represents a best response to the other strategies. So, if all the players are playing the strategies in a Nash equilibrium, they have no incentive to deviate, since their strategy is the best they can do given what others are doing.

The payoffs of the game are generally taken to represent the utility of individual players. Often in modeling situations the payoffs represent money, which presumably corresponds to an individual's utility. This assumption, however, can be faulty.

A prototypical paper on game theory in economics begins by presenting a game that is an abstraction of some particular economic situation. One or more solution concepts are chosen, and the author demonstrates which strategy sets in the presented game are equilibria of the appropriate type. Naturally one might wonder to what use should this information be put. Economists and business professors suggest two primary uses.

Descriptive



A three stage Centipede Game

The first use is to inform us about how actual human populations behave. Some scholars believe that by finding the equilibria of games they can predict how actual human populations will behave when confronted with situations analogous to the game being studied. This particular

view of game theory has come under recent criticism. First, it is criticized because the assumptions made by game theorists are often violated. Game theorists may assume players always act rationally to maximize their wins (the *Homo economicus* model), but real humans often act either irrationally, or act rationally to maximize the wins of some larger group of people (altruism). Game theorists respond by comparing their assumptions to those used in physics. Thus while their assumptions do not always hold, they can treat game theory as a reasonable scientific ideal akin to the models used by physicists. However, additional criticism of this use of game theory has been levied because some experiments have demonstrated that individuals do not play equilibrium strategies. For instance, in the Centipede game, Guess 2/3 of the average game, and the Dictator game, people regularly do not play Nash equilibria. There is an ongoing debate regarding the importance of these experiments. ^[3]

Alternatively, some authors claim that Nash equilibria do not provide predictions for human populations, but rather provide an explanation for why populations that play Nash equilibria remain in that state. However, the question of how populations reach those points remains open.

Some game theorists have turned to evolutionary game theory in order to resolve these worries. These models presume either no rationality or bounded rationality on the part of players. Despite the name, evolutionary game theory does not necessarily presume natural selection in the biological sense. Evolutionary game theory includes both biological as well as cultural evolution and also models of individual learning (for example, fictitious play dynamics).

Normative

The Prisoner's Dilemma

Cooperate Defect

| | | |
|------------------|------|------|
| Cooperate | 2, 2 | 0, 3 |
| Defect | 3, 0 | 1, 1 |

On the other hand, some scholars see game theory not as a predictive tool for the behavior of human beings, but as a suggestion for how people ought to behave. Since a Nash equilibrium of a game constitutes one's best response to the actions of the other players, playing a strategy that is part of a Nash equilibrium seems appropriate. However, this use for game theory has also come under criticism. First, in some cases it is appropriate to play a non-equilibrium strategy if one expects others to play non-equilibrium strategies as well. For an example, see Guess 2/3 of the average.

Second, the Prisoner's Dilemma presents another potential counterexample. In the Prisoner's Dilemma, each player pursuing his own self-interest leads both players to be worse off than had they not pursued their own self-interests. Some scholars believe that this demonstrates the failure of game theory as a recommendation for behavior.

Biology

Hawk-Dove

| | Hawk | Dove |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Hawk (V-C)/2, (V-C)/2 | V, 0 | |

| | | |
|-------------|------|----------|
| Dove | 0, V | V/2, V/2 |
|-------------|------|----------|

Unlike economics, the payoffs for games in biology are often interpreted as corresponding to fitness. In addition, the focus has been less on equilibria that correspond to a notion of rationality, but rather on ones that would be maintained by evolutionary forces. The most well-known equilibrium in biology is known as the Evolutionary stable strategy or (ESS), and was first introduced by John Maynard Smith (described in his 1982 book). Although its initial motivation did not involve any of the mental requirements of the Nash equilibrium, every ESS is a Nash equilibrium.

In biology, game theory has been used to understand many different phenomena. It was first used to explain the evolution (and stability) of the approximate 1:1 sex ratios. Ronald Fisher (1930) suggested that the 1:1 sex ratios are a result of evolutionary forces acting on individuals who could be seen as trying to maximize their number of grandchildren.

Additionally, biologists have used evolutionary game theory and the ESS to explain the emergence of animal communication (Maynard Smith & Harper, 2003). The analysis of signaling games and other communication games has provided some insight into the evolution of communication among animals.

Finally, biologists have used the Hawk-Dove game (also known as Chicken) to analyze fighting behavior and territoriality.

Computer science and logic

Game theory has come to play an increasingly important role in logic and in computer science. Several logical theories have a basis in game semantics. In addition, computer scientists have used games to model interactive computations. Computability logic attempts to develop a comprehensive formal theory (logic) of interactive computational tasks and resources, formalizing these entities as games between a computing agent and its environment.

Philosophy

Game theory has been put to several uses in philosophy. Responding to two papers by W.V.O. Quine (1960, 1967), David Lewis (1969) used game theory to develop a philosophical account of convention. In so doing, he provided the first analysis of common knowledge and employed it in analyzing play in coordination games. In addition, he first suggested that one can understand meaning in terms of signaling games. This later suggestion has been pursued by several philosophers since Lewis (Skyrms 1996, Grim et al. 2004).

The Stag Hunt

Stag Hare

| | | |
|-------------|------|------|
| Stag | 3, 3 | 0, 2 |
| Hare | 2, 0 | 2, 2 |

In ethics, some authors have attempted to pursue the project, begun by Thomas Hobbes, of deriving morality from self-interest. Since games like the Prisoner's Dilemma present an

apparent conflict between morality and self-interest, explaining why cooperation is required by self-interest is an important component of this project. This general strategy is a component of the general social contract view in political philosophy (for examples, see Gauthier 1987 and Kavka 1986).^[4]

Finally, other authors have attempted to use evolutionary game theory in order to explain the emergence of human attitudes about morality and corresponding animal behaviors. These authors look at several games including the Prisoner's Dilemma, Stag hunt, and the Nash bargaining game as providing an explanation for the emergence of attitudes about morality (see, e.g., Skyrms 1996, 2004; Sober and Wilson 1999).

History of game theory

The first known discussion of game theory occurred in a letter written by James Waldegrave in 1713. In this letter, Waldegrave provides a minimax mixed strategy solution to a two-person version of the card game le Her. It was not until the publication of Antoine Augustin Cournot's *Researches into the Mathematical Principles of the Theory of Wealth* in 1838 that a general game theoretic analysis was pursued. In this work Cournot considers a duopoly and presents a solution that is a restricted version of the Nash equilibrium.

Although Cournot's analysis is more general than Waldegrave's, game theory did not really exist as a unique field until John von Neumann published a series of papers in 1928. These results were later expanded in the 1944 book *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* by von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern. This profound work contains the method for finding optimal solutions for two-person zero-sum games. During this time period, work on game theory was primarily focused on cooperative game theory, which analyzes optimal strategies for groups of individuals, presuming that they can enforce agreements between them about proper strategies.

In 1950, the first discussion of the Prisoner's dilemma appeared, and an experiment was undertaken on this game at the RAND corporation. Around this same time, John Nash developed a definition of an "optimum" strategy for multiplayer games where no such optimum was previously defined, known as Nash equilibrium. This equilibrium is sufficiently general, allowing for the analysis of non-cooperative games in addition to cooperative ones.

Game theory experienced a flurry of activity in the 1950s, during which time the concepts of the core, the extensive form game, fictitious play, repeated games, and the Shapley value were developed. In addition, the first applications of Game theory to philosophy and political science occurred during this time.

In 1965, Reinhard Selten introduced his solution concept of subgame perfect equilibria, which further refined the Nash equilibrium (later he would introduce trembling hand perfection as well). In 1967, John Harsanyi developed the concepts of complete information and Bayesian games. He, along with John Nash and Reinhard Selten, won The Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel (also known as The Nobel Prize in Economics) in 1994.

In the 1970s, game theory was extensively applied in biology, largely as a result of the work of John Maynard Smith and his evolutionary stable strategy. In addition, the concepts of correlated equilibrium, trembling hand perfection, and common knowledge[5] were introduced and analyzed.

In 2005, game theorists Thomas Schelling and Robert Aumann won the Nobel Prize in Economics. Schelling worked on dynamic models, early examples of evolutionary game theory. Aumann contributed more to the equilibrium school, developing an equilibrium coarsening correlated equilibrium and developing extensive analysis of the assumption of common knowledge.

Notes

1. ^ GameTheory.net has an extensive list of references to game theory in popular culture.
2. ^ Some scholars would consider certain asymmetric games as examples of these games as well. However, the most common payoffs for each of these games are symmetric.
3. ^ Experimental work in game theory goes by many names, experimental economics, behavioral economics, and behavioral game theory are several. For a recent discussion on this field see Camerer 2003.
4. ^ For a more detailed discussion of the use of Game Theory in ethics see the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's entry game theory and ethics.
5. ^ Although common knowledge was first discussed by the philosopher David Lewis in his dissertation (and later book) Convention in the late 1960s, it was not widely considered by economists until Robert Aumann's work in the 1970s.

References

Textbooks and general reference texts

- Gibbons, Robert (1992) *Game Theory for Applied Economists*, Princeton University Press ISBN 0691003955 (readable; suitable for advanced undergraduates. Published in Europe by Harvester Wheatsheaf (London) with the title *A primer in game theory*)
- Gintis, Herbert (2000) *Game Theory Evolving* Princeton University Press ISBN 0691009430
- Osborne, Martin and Ariel Rubinstein: *A Course in Game Theory*, MIT Press, 1994, ISBN 0-262-65040-1 (modern introduction at the introductory graduate level)
- Fudenberg, Drew and Jean Tirole: *Game Theory*, MIT Press, 1991, ISBN 0262061414 (the definitive reference text)

Historically important texts

- Fisher, Ronald (1930) The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection Clarendon Press, Oxford.

- Luce, Duncan and Howard Raiffa Games and Decisions: Introduction and Critical Survey Dover ISBN 0486659437
- Maynard Smith, John Evolution and the Theory of Games, Cambridge University Press 1982
- Morgenstern, Oskar and John von Neumann (1947) The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior Princeton University Press
- Nash, John (1950) "Equilibrium points in n-person games" Proceedings of the National Academy of the USA 36(1):48-49.
- Poundstone, William Prisoner's Dilemma: John von Neumann, Game Theory and the Puzzle of the Bomb, ISBN 038541580X

Other print references

- Camerer, Colin (2003) *Behavioral Game Theory* Princeton University Press ISBN 0691090394
- Gauthier, David (1987) *Morals by Agreement* Oxford University Press ISBN 0198249926
- Grim, Patrick, Trina Kokalis, Ali Alai-Tafti, Nicholas Kilb, and Paul St Denis (2004) "Making meaning happen." *Journal of Experimental & Theoretical Artificial Intelligence* 16(4): 209-243.
- Kavka, Gregory (1986) *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory* Princeton University Press. ISBN 069102765X
- Lewis, David (1969) *Convention: A Philosophical Study*
- Maynard Smith, J. and Harper, D. (2003) *Animal Signals*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0198526857
- Quine, W.v.O (1967) "Truth by Convention" in *Philosophica Essays for A.N. Whitehead* Russel and Russel Publishers. ISBN 0846209705
- Quine, W.v.O (1960) "Carnap and Logical Truth" *Synthese* 12(4):350-374.
- Skyrms, Brian (1996) *Evolution of the Social Contract* Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521555833
- Skyrms, Brian (2004) *The Stag Hunt and the Evolution of Social Structure* Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521533929.
- Sober, Elliot and David Sloan Wilson (1999) *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior* Harvard University Press. ISBN 0674930479

Fundamental theorem of poker

The **fundamental theorem of poker** is a principle first articulated by David Sklansky that he believes expresses the essential nature of *poker* as a *game* of decision-making in the face of incomplete information.

Every time you play a hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see all your opponents' cards, they gain; and every time you play your hand the same way you would have played it if you could see all their cards, they lose. Conversely, every time opponents play their hands differently from the way they would have if they could see all your

cards, you gain; and every time they play their hands the same way they would have played if they could see all your cards, you lose.

The Fundamental Theorem is stated in common language, but its formulation is based on mathematical reasoning. Each decision that is made in poker can be analyzed in terms of the concept of expected value. The expected value expresses the average payoff of a decision if the decision is made a large number of times. The correct decision to make in a given situation is the decision that has the largest expected value.(Although sometimes it is correct not to choose this decision for the larger goal of long-term deception.) If you could see all your opponents' cards, you would always be able to calculate the correct decision with mathematical certainty. (This is certainly true heads-up, but is not always true in multi-way pots.) The less you deviate from these correct decisions, the better your expected long-term results. This is the mathematical expression of the Fundamental Theorem.

An example

Here is an example that illustrates how the Fundamental Theorem is applied. (This example assumes a familiarity with the basic rules and terminology of [holdem](#).) Suppose you are playing limit holdem and are dealt **9C 9S** under the gun before the flop. You call, and everyone folds to the big blind who checks. The flop comes **AC KD 10D**, and the big blind bets.

You now have a decision to make based upon incomplete information. In this particular circumstance, the correct decision is almost certainly to fold. There are too many turn and river cards that could kill your hand. Even if the big blind does not have an A or a K, there are 3 cards to a straight and 2 cards to a flush on the flop, and she could easily be on a straight or flush draw. You are essentially drawing to 2 outs (another 9), and even if you catch one of these outs, your set may not hold up.

However, suppose you knew (with 100% certainty) the big blind held **8D 7D**. In this case, it would be correct to *raise*. Even though the big blind would still be getting the correct pot odds to call, the best decision is to raise. (Calling would be giving the big blind infinite pot odds, and this decision makes less money in the long run than raising.) Therefore, by folding (or even calling), you have played your hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see your opponent's cards, and so by the Fundamental Theorem of Poker, she has gained. You have made a "mistake", in the sense that you have played differently from the way you would have played if you knew the big blind held **8D 7D**, even though this "mistake" is almost certainly the best decision given the incomplete information available to you.

This example also illustrates that one of the most important goals in poker is to induce your opponents to make mistakes. In this particular hand, the big blind has practiced deception by employing a semi-bluff -- she has bet a hand, hoping you will fold, but she still has outs even if you call or raise. She has induced you to make a mistake.

Multi-way pots and implicit collusion

The Fundamental Theorem of Poker applies to all heads-up decisions, but it does not apply to all multi-way decisions. This is because each opponent of a player can make an incorrect decision, but the "collective decision" of all the opponents works against the player.

This type of situation occurs mostly in games with multi-way pots, when a player has a strong hand, but several opponents are chasing with draws or other weaker hands. Sometimes such a situation is referred to as **implicit collusion**. Experts disagree on the prevalence of implicit collusion in particular games, as well as the extent to which implicit collusion might be unethical.

The Fundamental Theorem of Poker is simply expressed and appears axiomatic, yet its proper application to the countless varieties of circumstances that a poker player may face requires a great deal of knowledge, skill, and experience.

Morton's theorem

Morton's theorem is a [poker](#) principle articulated by Andy Morton. It states that in multiway [pots](#), a player's expectation may be maximised by an opponent making a correct decision.

The most common application of Morton's theorem occurs when one player holds the best hand, but there are two or more opponents on draws. In this case, the player with the best hand might make more money in the long run when an opponent folds to a bet, *even if that opponent is folding correctly and would be making a personal mistake to call the bet*. This type of situation is sometimes referred to as *implicit collusion*.

Morton's theorem should be contrasted with the [fundamental theorem of poker](#), which states that you want your opponents to make decisions which minimise their own expectation. The discrepancy between the two "theorems" occurs because of the presence of more than one opponent. Whereas the fundamental theorem always applies heads-up (one opponent), it does not always apply in multiway pots. The scope of Morton's theorem in multiway situations is a subject of controversy. For example, Morton himself expresses the belief that the fundamental theorem rarely applies to multiway situations.

An example

The following example is credited to Morton, who first posted on [rec.gambling.poker](#). (Some numbers have been changed to allow for complete information, see below.)

Suppose in [holdem](#) you hold **ADKC** and the flop is **KS9H3H**, giving you top pair with best [kicker](#). When the betting on the [flop](#) is complete, you have two opponents remaining, one of whom you know has the [nut flush draw](#) (say **AHTH**, giving him 9 [outs](#)) and one of whom you believe holds second pair with random kicker (say **QC9C**, 4 outs), leaving you with all the remaining cards in the deck as your outs. The [turn](#) card is an apparent blank (say **6D**) and say the [pot](#) size at that point is P , expressed in big bets.

When you bet the turn player *A*, holding the flush draw, is sure to call and is almost certainly getting the correct [pot odds](#) to call your bet. Once player *A* calls, player *B* must decide whether to call or fold. To figure out which action player *B* should choose, calculate his expectation in each case. This depends on the number of cards among the remaining 42 that will give him the best hand, and the size of the pot when he is deciding. (Here, as in arguments involving the

fundamental theorem, we assume that each player has complete information of their opponents' cards.)

$$E(\text{player B} | \text{folding}) = 0$$

$$E(\text{player B} | \text{calling}) = (4/42) \cdot (P + 2) - (38/42) \cdot (1)$$

Player B doesn't win or lose anything by folding. When calling, he wins the pot $4/42$ of the time, and loses one big bet the remainder of the time. Setting these two expectations equal to each other and solving for P lets us determine the pot-size at which he is indifferent to calling or folding:

$$E(\text{player B} | \text{folding}) = E(\text{player B} | \text{calling})$$

$$\Rightarrow P = 7.5 \text{ big bets}$$

When the pot is larger than this, player B should chase you; otherwise, it's in B 's best interest to fold.

To figure out which action on player B 's part *you* would prefer, calculate your expectation the same way

$$E(\text{you} | \text{B folds}) = (33/42) \cdot (P + 2)$$

$$E(\text{you} | \text{B calls}) = (29/42) \cdot (P + 3)$$

Your expectation depends in each case on the size of the pot (in other words, the pot odds B is getting when considering his call.) Setting these two equal lets us calculate the pot-size P where you are indifferent whether B calls or folds:

$$E(\text{you} | \text{B calls}) = E(\text{you} | \text{B folds})$$

$$\Rightarrow P = 5.25 \text{ big bets}$$

When the pot is smaller than this, you profit when player B is chasing, but when the pot is larger than this, your expectation is higher when B folds instead of chasing.

In this case, there is a range of pot-sizes where it's correct for B to fold, and you make more money when he does so than when he incorrectly chases. You can see this graphically below

| B SHOULD FOLD | B SHOULD CALL | v | YOU WANT B TO CALL | YOU WANT B TO FOLD | v +---
+---+---+---+---+---+---+---> pot-size P in big bets 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 XXXXXXXXX ^
"PARADOXICAL REGION"

The range of pot sizes marked with the X's is where you want your opponent to fold correctly, because you lose expectation when he calls incorrectly.

Analysis

In essence, in the above example, when player B calls in the "paradoxical region", he is paying too high a price for his weak draw, but you are no longer the sole benefactor of that high price — player A is now taking B 's money those times that A makes his flush draw. Compared to the case where you are heads up with player B , you still stand the risk of losing the whole pot, but are no longer getting 100% of the compensation from B 's loose calls.

It is the existence of this middle region of pot sizes, where you want at least some of your opponents to fold correctly, that explains the standard poker strategy of thinning the field as much as possible when you think you hold the best hand. Even players with incorrect draws cost you money when they call your bets, because part of their calls end up in the stacks of other players drawing against you.

Because you are losing expectation from *B*'s call, it follows that the *aggregate* of all other players (i.e., *A* and *B*) must be gaining from *B*'s call. In other words, if *A* and *B* were to meet in the parking lot after the game and split their profits, they would have been colluding against you. This is sometimes referred to as *implicit collusion*. It should be contrasted with what is sometimes called *schooling*. Schooling occurs when many players *correctly* call against a player with the best hand, whereas implicit collusion occurs when a player *incorrectly* calls against a player with the best hand.

One conclusion of Morton's theorem is that, for example, in holdem, the value of suited hands goes up, because they are precisely the types of hands which will benefit from implicit collusion.

Psychology

After all is said and done, **poker is ultimately about psychology** - playing against your competitors. For example, many games often end with a very small hand, such as a pair of 7s, beating a smaller hand, such as a pair of 3s. Never forget that your hand doesn't have to be the best hand possible. It simply has to be better than those LEFT in the hand!

Knowing what your opponents have is an art, not a science. Many successful (and unsuccessful!) poker players talk about "tells" - twitches, trembles, and other bodily signs that might give you a clue as to what your opponent has. In time, you may even learn to be able to "read" those tells. Mastering the psychology of poker, however, is much more important (and, in fact, a crucial foundation before reading tells is even possible).

Poker psychology boils down to your ability to watch how others play, and use that experience to judge how your opponents may be playing in the current hand. It is critical that you never become distracted from the game. For example, do not watch TV, even during a friendly game, for this will deprive you of the information you gain while watching your opponents. Even in a friendly game, your "friends" are trying to take your money from you!

The simplest layer of poker psychology is to watch what your opponents visibly do based on their own cards. For example, keep track of how each player bets. If you have problems doing this, start by only keeping track of those who did not fold, and don't worry about keeping track of amounts. Simply get a feel for whether the players bet strongly or weakly. During a showdown, note the hands each player had. Were they betting heavily with a weak hand? Was the hand possibly going to "make it?" (e.g., were they drawing to a flush, and just didn't make it? Was the flush even possible? Was it likely, or was it a long shot?)

This is not a skill learned in a day. You must play THOUSANDS of hands to master it. Gradually, you will build a feel for how players bet in response to what they have in their hands. Then focus on how they respond to other players. Did they come out betting heavily early in the

game, then fade away and eventually fold to heavy raising, even if their hand looked like it improved? Did they instead re-raise or cap the betting?

The same mathematical strategies that apply to you can be of assistance here, especially in community card or stud games, which give you some information about what the other players have even before the showdown. In fact, it is during these games that poker psychology is most readily learned, because in draw games you never know what the player discarded.

Learn to classify your opponents, and adjust your strategy against how they play. For example, identify whether your opponents are loose or tight. If they are loose, they are likely to bet heavily or stay in for a long time with even a very weak hand, or on a long shot draw. Tight players, however, tend to fold at every breeze. Also categorize them in terms of passive or aggressive. When raised, do they tend to call or fold? Or do they re-raise?

Ultimately, no single strategy will ever teach you the art of poker psychology. You will either learn it over a long period of time playing many hands, or you will go broke trying!

Tells

Tells

In [poker](#), a **tell** is a detectable change in a player's behavior that gives clues to that player's assessment of their hand. Possible tells include leaning forward or back, placing chips with more or less force, fidgeting, changes in breathing or tone of voice, direction of gaze and actions with the cards, cigarettes, or drinks.

For example, a player who believes his hand to be weak, hoping to bluff, may throw his chips into the pot forcefully and with a direct gaze at a player he hopes to discourage from calling.

Tells may be common to a class of players or unique to a single player. A player gains an advantage if she observes another player's tell, particularly if that action is unconscious and reliable. However, better players may fake tells, hoping to lead their opponents into costly traps when they rely on the false information. So the observing, creating, and evaluating of tells can add another level to the play of poker.

It is important to note that a player's tells only give information about that player's own assessment of their cards, and thus is only reliable in the context of a player who has accurately assessed their own hand. An unskillful player may reliably give information in a tell, but that information may be an unreliable guide to the player's hand if the player cannot assess the strength of a hand in a particular game.

A number of tells are common to most poker players -- when someone with normally-still hands bets, and their hands shake, it's a release of tension indicating that they are confident in their cards. As well, most players act -- as in, try to conceal their intentions -- and generally behave aggressively or loudly with a weak assessment, while acting meek and mild with strong ones. More in-depth information can be gleaned from Mike Caro's comprehensive book on tells; his *Book of Tells* (ISBN 0897461002) is now a standard reference on the subject.

David Mamet's 1987 movie *House of Games* includes an interesting discussion and visual reference to tells as an essential part of the plot. The movie *Rounders* contains an even more subtle use of strategy: at one point, "Mike" discovers a tell in his opponent (that he eats cookies in a particular way after he has bet a very strong hand), and after using it once, he reveals to the

opponent that he has this tell; although this eliminates the usefulness of the tell itself, it upsets his opponent so much that it affects his later play.

Draw

One is said to be **drawing** in a [poker](#) game if one has a [hand](#) that is incomplete and needs further cards to become valuable. The hand itself is called a **draw**. For example, in [seven-card stud](#), if four of your first five cards are all spades, but your hand is otherwise worthless (no pairs, no straight), you are said to be drawing for a [flush](#). Contrast this with a [made hand](#), which has value already. If another player has a made hand that will beat your potential flush, then you are *drawing dead*, that is, even if you make your flush, you will lose, therefore the draw is not worth pursuing.

Whether or not it is good strategy to play a drawing hand depends upon the nature of the game being played, the size of the pot, the betting structure, and many other factors. However, the most basic principle is the ratio of [pot odds](#) to the odds of making your hand: if the pot odds are greater, then the draw is likely worth pursuing if you are not drawing dead.

Straight draws

A [straight](#) draw usually has four of the five needed cards in sequence, for example, **2-3-4-5**. This is called an *open straight draw* because it can be completed on either end, with either an ace or a six. Open straight draws are generally four cards; a three-card straight draw is rarely worth pursuing. More hazardous is an *inside straight draw*, also called a *gutshot* or *belly buster*, such as **A-3-4-5** — only a 2 will complete the hand, so the chances of making the hand are halved. The same principle applies to the draws **A-2-3-4** and **J-Q-K-A**, because only a five can complete the first and only a ten can complete the second, though these are not called inside straight draws (nor are they open straight draws). No matter what the game is, drawing to an inside straight is rarely a good idea — it is when the [pot odds](#) justify it, but this is rare. For example, in [Texas hold 'em](#), the chance of hitting an inside straight draw after the [flop](#) is 8.5% for the next card, or about 1 in 12. That means if the bet size is \$5, the pot must be at least $5 \times 12 = \$60$ to call. If it is, which may happen if, for instance, you are in late position and the table is full of [maniacs](#), then it is usually incorrect *not* to draw to the straight, unless there is a good chance that somebody else can beat you (usually with a flush or full house), in which case you are drawing dead.

An uncommon variation of the inside straight draw, only possible in games with more than five cards in play such as [seven card stud](#) or [Texas hold 'em](#), is the *double belly buster*. This is a sequence of cards with two inside straight draws, for example, **A-3-4-5-7**. In this case, either a two or a six will complete a straight. This makes the odds of hitting the hand the same as hitting a normal straight draw.

Flush draws

It sounds strange, but **flush** draws are easier to hit than straight draws, even though a straight is more probable than a flush. For example, in **Texas hold 'em**, a flush draw with four cards has nine outs, but an open-ended straight draw has only eight outs, so a flush draw will usually be a favorite over a straight draw.

In **Texas hold 'em** and **Omaha hold 'em**, if a player has only three of a suit on the **flop**, the player will need the **turn** and the **river** to be the right suit to hit the flush. This is called a *runner-runner flush draw* (*runner-runner* for short), or a *backdoor flush*. The probability of completing the flush is roughly 4%, therefore drawing to a runner-runner is similar to drawing to an inside straight on the river, and the same advice applies: it's not likely to be justified, but it can be if the pot is big enough. It is also easy to draw dead with a runner-runner, because if there are four of a suit on the board, then a player needs to be holding only one card of that suit. A player who holds the ace of that suit will have the nut (best possible) flush. Therefore, in chasing a runner-runner where such a board will be necessary, it is often not a good idea if the flush would not be the nut flush.

Other draws

Sometimes a **made hand** needs to draw to a better hand. For instance, you may have **three of a kind** kings, but may lose to a **flush**. Therefore, you will want to have a nut flush draw (in order to beat or tie the other flush). Failing that, you have a **full house** draw and a **four of a kind** draw. Suppose the game is **Texas hold 'em**, you hold **K-K**, and the board is **9-K-2-6**, and the first three cards are spades, making it easy for a flush to have been made on the flop. This also means that you have no flush draw, because you hold kings and one of them would need to be the king of spades, which is already on the board. You will, however, win if the next card is an nine, six, or two, because these will give a full house. Each of those gives three outs each, for a total of nine outs. There is also one king left, which will yield four of a kind, for a total of ten outs. The percent chance of making your hand in the next card is roughly twice the number of outs, giving a 20% chance, or 1 in 5. If it will cost less than 20% of the pot size to call, then calling will still be the right move.

Position

Position in **poker** is the order in which players are seated around the table, and the strategic and tactical consequences of this. On any betting round, the player who acts first (called being "under the gun") has a distinct disadvantage compared to those who act later (who are said to be in "late position"), because the later players will always have more information on which to base their decisions. You are said to "have position" on players who act before you in a betting round, and are said to be "out of position" to those players who act after you.

Because players act in clockwise order, a player seated on your left is said to "have position" on you in the game in general (not just a particular betting round), because he will act after you far more often than he will act before you (the latter will only occur rarely, such as when you have the button in a rotating-deal game). It is said that money flows clockwise at a poker table,

your goal being to interrupt the flow as it passes though you. For this reason, players' seats are always drawn randomly in [tournaments](#), and are occasionally redrawn during play. When there are only two players (called being "heads up"), neither has position in general as the players alternate who acts first on each deal.

[Stud](#) games, in which the first player to act on each betting round is determined by upcards, are called "non-positional" games, because players generally can't use knowledge of position to plan strategies for future betting rounds (though relative seating still matters). Other games like [Draw](#) are extremely positional, and in fact one's position relative to an opponent can be more important tactically than the cards you hold.

Here's an example from [Texas hold'em](#): There are 10 players playing \$4/\$8 [fixed limit](#); the player to the left of the button (let's call her Angela) pays a \$2 [blind](#), the next player (Bill) pays a \$4 blind, and you (Charlie) are next to act. If you have a hand like **KC JS**, you should probably fold. With 9 players remaining to act, the chances are reasonably high that at least one of them will have a [dominating hand](#) like **K-Q** or **J-J** that you will be unlikely to beat, and even if they don't, 7 of them (all but the two players in the blind) will have position on you in the next three betting rounds.

Now let us suppose instead that you are Ian, and the button is to your immediate left in front of John. Charlie, Donna, Eve, Frank, Gina, and Harold all fold, and you now find the same **KC JS** in your hand. Now things are different. There are only three players left to act, so the odds that one of them has a dominating hand are considerably less. Secondly, two of those three (Angela and Bill) will be out of position to you on later betting rounds. The play here is to raise, and hope that this will convince John (the only player who has position on you) to fold. You might even [steal](#) the blinds if they don't have playable hands, but if they do play you will be in good shape to take advantage of your position.

Pot odds

Pot odds is one of the most important concepts in [poker strategy](#). Pot odds are defined as the ratio of the current size of the pot divided by the size of the next potential bet, from the point of view of the player about to make the bet. For example, if a player is facing a \$5 raise by his opponent (and must therefore pay \$5 to call the raise), and the total amount of money in the pot (including the uncalled raise) before his potential call is \$30, then he is facing 6-to-1 pot odds for the call. If he is contemplating raising another \$5 (making his potential bet \$10), then he is facing 3-to-1 pot odds for the raise.

For every potential action (fold, [call](#), [raise](#)) at every point in a game of poker, the correct strategy is influenced by the pot odds facing the player. For example, the lower the pot odds facing a call, the more likely it is that folding will be the correct play, and the higher the pot odds facing a call, the more likely it is that calling is the correct play (to take an extreme example, if you can call for \$1 with a \$1000 pot, there is essentially *no hand* that would be correct to fold, because you only have to win one time in a thousand in similar situations for the call to be profitable). Similarly, small pot odds favor bluffing, because they make it less correct for an opponent to call.

Frequently players develop instinct or judgment about the size of the pot relative to their potential bets in various situations and make adjustments, but in some cases it is important to get an exact count. For example, on the next-to-last round of a game when your opponent bets and you are facing a decision on whether to call with a [drawing](#) hand, you need to compare your exact pot odds with the odds of completing your hand (though other factors may be involved as well). Another situation is deciding whether to bluff on the final round: [game theory](#) shows that one should bluff a percentage of the time equal to your opponent's pot odds to call the bluff. For example, in a [pot limit](#) game if the pot is \$30 and you are contemplating a \$30 bet (which will give your opponent 2-to-1 pot odds for his call), you should bluff half as often as you would bet for [value](#). With a larger pot, you would bluff less often.

Protection

In [poker](#), one of the motives for betting or raising is to give your hand **protection**, which means to encourage opponents to fold a [drawing](#) hand that might otherwise improve to beat yours. This is generally done with a [made hand](#) that you perceive as vulnerable to an opponent's drawing hand. This differs from a [bluff](#) in that the latter can win *only* when the opponent folds, while a bet for protection is made with a hand that is likely to win a showdown, but is not strong enough for [sandbagging](#).

It is especially important to bet for protection when there are multiple opponents. For example, if your hand is presently the best, but each of four opponents has a 1-in-6 chance of beating you, the four *combined* are actually a favorite to defeat you, even though each one is individually an underdog. If you bet, some or all of them will fold, leaving you with fewer opponents and a better chance of winning.

The term *protection* is also often heard in the context of an *all-in* player (see [poker table stakes rules](#)), because a bet by any player serves to protect the hand of an all-in player just as it protects the bettor (and possibly more so). To deliberately make such a bet solely to protect a hand other than your own is a form of collusion.

A player may also be said to "protect" his or her cards by placing an object like a specialty chip or miniature figure upon them. This prevents the player from having his cards accidentally discarded by the dealer.

Value

In [poker](#), the strength of one's hand (that is, how likely it is to be the best according to the rules of the game being played) is often called its **value**, but discussions of [poker strategy](#) often use the term in a more specific sense to describe a type of bet: A bet "for value" is a bet made for the purpose of increasing the size of the pot, and which the player wants his opponents to call. This is in contrast to a [bluff](#) or a [protection](#) bet (though some bets may have a combination of these motives).

Most of the time, this is because the player believes his hand is valuable in the first sense, and he therefore wants his opponents to put money into the pot that he expects to win from them at [showdown](#). In certain situations, though, even a [drawing](#) hand that is not currently the best can value bet: For example, on the next-to-last betting round of a [fixed limit](#) game, if a player surmises that he has a 1-in-4 chance of being dealt a final card that will give him a winning hand, and there are six opponents remaining, he can bet for value even though he will lose three out of four times, because the one time he does win he will win more than three times the amount bet (so the bet earns money in the long run). This is still a value bet, because it is made hoping the opponents will call and build a bigger pot in anticipation of winning (even though the win is only statistical).

Bad beat

In [poker](#), a **bad beat** occurs when a hand, which was at one time a big favourite to win, loses. Typically the term is only applied in this way when the player holding the eventual winning hand misplayed it spectacularly.

Alternatively, the term is also applied when a particularly strong hand loses to an even stronger one. In some [casinos](#) there is a "bad beat jackpot" awarded whenever a player suffers a particular beat; for example, having four-of-a-kind beaten.

Example

An (extreme) example of the first type of bad beat, in no-limit [Texas Hold'em](#):

- Alice (the *hero*) holds **AD AC** - pocket aces, the strongest possible starting hand.
- Bob (the *villain*) holds **QC 8H** - a weak hand.

The players have the same amount of chips. Before the flop, Alice raises to 15 times the big blind, placing a fifth of her stack in the pot, and only Bob calls. The flop comes **AH 8S 7S**. Although Alice has [the nuts](#) at this point, making 3 aces, she is concerned about possible draws to a straight or flush, and goes all-in with a bet that is twice the size of the pot. Bizarrely, Bob, who has only middle-pair, calls.

At this point, Bob's chances of winning are precisely 1 in 990. [1] He can only win if both the turn card and the river card are eights. Since this is a bad beat story, the turn and river naturally bring precisely that, and Bob scoops the pot, leaving Alice cursing Bob's appalling play - he should not have called such a big bet before the flop, nor on the flop.

Reacting to bad beats

Some players react badly when given a bad beat - professional player Phil Hellmuth is notorious for this - but others take the more stoic view that a player such as Bob in the above example is playing *exactly* how they would wish him to play - he is essentially trying to give away money, though he failed on that one occasion. But in the long run, Bob's reckless playing style will cost him much more than he will win, to the eventual benefit of his opponents.

Nevertheless, such a beat is often a profound psychological blow, and can easily lead to a player going on [tilt](#).

In [online poker](#) rooms, bad beats often lead to accusations that the random number generator is "rigged", even though such beats occur in offline games.

[Dickings](#) | [Bad beat jackpot](#) | [Tilt](#)

Dickings

Dickings is a [poker](#) term that implies a [bad beat](#).

Consider the following hand: A player is holding **AD KD** and the [Flop](#) comes up **10D JD QS**, giving the player [the nuts](#), both a [Straight](#) to the Ace, and 4 of a [Royal Flush](#).

The [Turn](#) is **4S**, and the [River](#) is **8S**, giving another player holding **7S 2S** (A hand referred to as the [Hammer](#), arguably the worst possible starting hand in Hold'em) the [Flush](#), beating the first player's [Straight](#).

The first player is said to have been 'dicked', and his friends may refer to the 'dickings' that were handed out and the player may then go [on tilt](#).

Bad beat jackpot

In [poker](#), a **bad beat jackpot** is a jackpot that is paid when a sufficiently strong hand is shown down and loses to an even stronger hand held by another player. Not all poker games offer bad beat jackpots, and those that do have specific requirements for how strong a losing hand must be to qualify for the jackpot. For example, the losing hand may be required to be four-of-a-kind eights or better. There may be additional requirements as well. For example, in [Texas hold 'em](#) there is usually a requirement that both hole cards play in both the losing and winning hands. These rules vary from one card room or casino to the next.

Bad beat jackpots are usually progressive, with a small rake being taken out of each pot to fund the jackpot (this is in addition to the regular rake). When the jackpot is won, it is usually split among all players sitting at the table at the time of the bad beat (including players that folded their hands), with the largest shares of the jackpot going to the players holding the winning and losing hands. Because bad beats are rare, jackpots can grow to be quite large, sometimes reaching hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Tilt

Tilt is a [poker](#) term for a state of mental confusion or frustration in which a player knowingly adopts a sub-optimal, over-aggressive strategy.

Placing an opponent on tilt or dealing with being on tilt oneself is one of the most important aspects of poker. It is a relatively frequent occurrence, due to frustration, animosity against other

players, or simple bad luck. Experienced players recommend learning to recognize that one is experiencing tilt and to avoid allowing it to influence one's play. However, putting one's opponents on tilt is a remarkably effective way to win at the poker table, albeit one that isn't going to win many friends.

Being "on tilt"

The most common way to wind up on tilt is to be the victim of a [bad beat](#), or being defeated in a particularly public and humiliating fashion. For example:

1. Folding to a large bet only to have your opponent turn over a horrible hand (being shown a [bluff](#)).
2. Even worse: being [bluffed](#) by a small bet (a [post oak bluff](#)).
3. Having an opponent "suck out", or catch a miracle card late in the hand (an unlikely [out-draw](#)).
4. Having what you think is a dominating hand be bested by an even more powerful hand that you never saw coming.

All of these can upset the mental equilibrium considered essential for optimal poker judgement. Another common way to wind up on tilt is through basic annoyance at the behavior of the others at the poker table. Excessive rudeness (or lewdness), being heavily intoxicated at the table, and otherwise poor [table etiquette](#) are all common ways that other players can begin to wear on your nerves.

The most important thing to remember about being on tilt is to recognize when you're beginning to become on tilt. If you don't recognize the situation and take measures to alleviate it (changing tables, several deep breaths, imagining beating the snot out of the player at the table), you will quickly wind up broke and only more frustrated than you were when you started going on tilt.

For the beginning player, the elimination of tilt is considered to be the most essential improvement that can be made in play (for instance in the strategic advise of Mike Caro and especially, Lou Krieger). Many advanced players (after logging thousands of table-hours) claim to have outgrown "tilt" and frustration, although other poker professionals admit it is still a "leak" in their game.

Putting others "on tilt"

Any player with a decent amount of play-time under their belts can beat a table filled with bet-crazy "maniacs" who will go all-in with any two cards. However, winning at a poker table that has eight fifty year-old men who only bet or [raise](#) if they have two face cards and fold under the slightest amount of pressure is much more difficult. Putting a player on tilt infuriates them to the point where they will call or raise almost any bet made.

The act of putting someone on tilt may not pay off in the short run, but if some time is put into practicing it, a player can quickly become an expert at "tilting" other players (with or without bad manners). In theory, the long-run payoff of this tactic is a positive expectation, although it has been observed (e.g. by David Sklansky) that a more profitable strategy is likely to be superior table selection.

Some of the more common methods of putting a table on tilt include:

1. Playing junk hands that have only a slight chance of winning in the hope of sucking out on the turn or the river and delivering a bad beat (this can be an enjoyable occasional style which will make the table's play "looser", and has been 'perfected' by players such as Daniel Negreanu in low and middle-limit play.)
2. Victimizing certain individuals at the table, (which is often considered a more old-fashioned tactic, identified with 1970s "verbal" experts such as Amarillo Slim.)
3. Pretending to be drunk, i.e. hustling, excellently demonstrated by Paul Newman vs. Robert Shaw in *The Sting* (although his technique included [cheating](#)).
4. Constant chattering, making weird noises and motions whenever you win a hand, or other erratic behaviour is a "tilting" or "loosening" approach first discussed by Mike Caro.
5. Taking an incredibly long time to announce and show your hand at the [showdown](#). (Such deliberate breaches of etiquette have the side effect of slowing play and risking barring, thereby limiting the earnings of the expert player. For this, and other social reasons, such tactics are mostly associated with the novice.)

All of the above have been recommended as methods of upsetting the other players at the table, with the intention of having them betting into your winning hands, and playing sub-optimally.

Cheating

Cheating in poker is any behavior outside the rules intended to give an unfair advantage to one or more players. Many people make the distinction in [poker](#) between **hard** cheating (mechanics, collusion, and the like) and **soft** cheating (noting the bottom card that the dealer happened to expose without calling for a misdeal). While the rules are explicit on the subject of cheating in general, many otherwise fair players are tempted to "soft cheat". Miscalculating your hand (calling four hearts a flush, for example--hence a "four-flusher") is cheating, while offering alcoholic drinks is not, because each player can decline.

Introduction

Cheating is more common in [poker](#) than most people care to believe. Although most cheating occurs in private games that do not follow strict gaming procedures, it is also very common in regulated card rooms and [casinos](#). Cheating can be done either by means of collusion, sleight-of-hand (such as [bottom dealing](#), stacking the deck, switching cards etc), or the use of cheating gaffs (such as marked cards, holdout devices, glims etc).

Cheating is as common in friendly games as it is in high-stakes games. A card cheat may operate alone, but most of them operate in pairs or small groups. The groups are often composed of one card mechanic who is in charge of manipulating the cards, one or several shills who pose as regular players, and a muscle who acts as a bodyguard. Street gangs also often employ a wall man who acts as a lookout, however this approach is more common with three card monte mobs, and back-alley dice gangs.

Following is a list of terms used to categorize specific card cheats:

- card mechanic -- A card cheat who specializes in sleight-of-hand manipulation of cards.
- base dealer/second dealer -- Also called [bottom dealer](#)/second dealer is a cheat that specializes in bottom/second dealing.
- paper player -- A card cheat that exploits the use of marked cards.
- hand mucker -- A card cheat that specializes in switching cards.
- machine player -- A card cheat that uses mechanical holdouts.
- crossroader -- Originally, any kind of traveling hustler; but now the term is mainly used to describe cheats who specialize in hitting casinos.

Minimal-skill methods

The easiest method for a cheat, hard or soft, requires no ability of manipulation, but rather the profound nerve to blatantly cheat. Such methods include miscalculating hands, shorting the pot, and peeking at cards. Such cheating should not be tolerated. However, it is very difficult to prove because when confronted the cheat often calls the cheating an honest mistake.

A simple and fair way to go about preventing this kind of cheating is to simply follow the rules. For example, "[Cards speak](#)" is the common expression for the rule that no matter what the player says, it is the cards that determine who wins the pot. While it's barely legal to call a bad

hand a full house in the hopes that people will give up, the players should want to see this hand: they paid to look at it. Should such honest "mistakes" occur, it is best to ask the player to leave for that evening. If it was an honest mistake, he is in no condition to play poker (put aside your greed on this one - he will come back). If he did mean to cheat, he can't do it from outside the game and is unlikely to come back.

The minimal skill methods of cheating occur far more often than one might suspect. It is common for a player who has folded to appoint himself tender of the pot, stacking chips, counting them, and delivering them to the winning player, just so he doesn't have to get up. Nobody seems to notice the chip palmed in the hand of this helpful player. This is called **check-copping**. This happens a lot. In fact, odorless adhesive can be used for this purpose. Once again, the answer is to follow the rules. Only at the showdown should a player touch the pot. In fact, it is a considerate player who obeys the rule concerning placing chips in the pot; the player does not throw the chips in the pot (splashing) but places them in an easily counted stack in the center of the table.

Cheating can happen even when the cheat does not have the deal. In **draw poker**, a player can discard two cards, throwing these two in the pile of discards so as to avoid counting (or if there is no pile, throw them on top of another player's discards), while calling for three. Not only does the cheat get the one card advantage in this hand, but before the showdown, he can ditch this extra card in his lap or vest, and thereby retain this one card advantage throughout the game. In this case, it is the dealer's job to regulate the discards, and to ensure the fairness of the process. In a way, this is the most fair. In exchange for the huge positional advantage the dealer has, he has responsibilities to occupy his time.

Marked cards

The most known method of cheating is using marked cards. The cards are printed or altered such that the cheater can know their value while only looking at the back. The ways of marking are *far* too numerous to mention, but certain broad types can be mentioned. A common way of marking cards involves marks on a round design on the card so as to be read like a clock (an ace is marked at one o' clock and so on until the king which is not marked). Shading a card by putting it in the sun or scratching the surface with a razor are ways to mark an already printed deck.

Much talk and advertisement has been about concerning "colored readers", that is, marked cards that can only be read with the use of color filtered glasses or contact lenses. While such decks are available, they are painfully obvious to the observant poker player. Many cheating authorities mention the idea that while wearing contact lenses they always slip off-kilter to the pupil, therefore a red (the most common color) crescent will be visible on the sclera around the iris.

Juice is a substance used to mark cards in a subtle way so as to avoid detection. Apparently one has to be "taught" to read juice patterns, but once taught, one can read (hence the term for marked cards "readers") them from across the table. An easy way to protect yourself from marked decks is to as the cheats say "go to the movies". The idea is to flip through the cards rapidly, treating the deck much like a movie flip-book. If there is any difference in the cards, they should become rapidly apparent. Decks can also be marked while playing. A cheat can hold

his hand in such a way that it will bend or bulge in a position that the cheat can read from across the table (called a **crimp**). In this case one should remember it is stipulated in the rules that any player may at any time request a new deck.

Moderate-skill methods

A cheat with moderate skill always has the option to **hand-muck**, that is, switch their hand with one they have secretly hidden on them somewhere. This may also be done with a confederate (see Collusion). Mechanical devices have been *invented* for the purpose of switching hands. Though such machines are outdated, the modern equivalents (clips that hold cards on the underside of the table) should not be overlooked. The "hands above the table" house rule is recommended to prevent this. If it is done above the table, then anyone at the table can see it. This type of cheat runs the risk that he plays the same card as someone else at the table; at which time there must be a cheat at the table. Most people, not wanting to point fingers, will just end the game for the evening.

Skilled methods

Never doubt that a skilled cheat may deal a card from any place in the deck. A skilled cheat can deal the second card, the bottom card, the second from bottom card, and the middle card. The idea is to "**cull**", or to find the cards one needs, place them at the bottom, top, or any other place the cheat wants, then false deal them to himself or his confederate. Suppose the cheat is next to deal. In the previous showdown, there are four sevens in different hands. The cheat picks up the cards so that all four sevens end up on the bottom of the deck. He then false shuffles the deck and deals himself the four sevens off the bottom of the deck.

There are many **tells** as to this kind of cheating:

1. Beware of anyone gripping the deck with the index finger in front of it. This is referred to as the mechanics grip. It not only allows better control of the cards, but provides cover as, showing the back of the top card, and without moving the hand holding the deck.
2. Beware any shuffle instantly followed by a cut. This is a well known way to undo a shuffle. The idea is that, as the halves of the deck are taken apart, the bottom half is shuffled so its top card is on top. Cutting the cards, and in doing so, unweaving the interlaced cards, places the bottom half right where it started. Completing the cut places the deck in its original order.

Dealing mechanics

Despite all this high power sleight of hand, the cheat still won't win money with four sevens if everyone else has a bust, so the cheat stacks two hands. Obviously the cheat will get the better one. Let's say he has two hands one on the bottom of each half of the deck, ready to shuffle (let's say four kings and four aces). All the cheat has to do is to shuffle the two halves **PERFECTLY**, that is, alternating from one half to the other. When done with the whole deck this is called a **faro shuffle**. This places in alternating order on the bottom of the deck the cards K,A,K,A,K,A,K,A.

He can then **false shuffle** to his heart's content without disturbing those eight bottom cards, and begin dealing. When he gets to his mark, he deals that player the bottom card. He deals himself bottoms too. This places the big fish with four kings, a real betting hand, and the cheat with four aces, hence the cheat cleans up. This is called the double duke.

The best way to foil mechanics of this nature is to **burn** them, to watch their hands at all times and to always insist on a cut. This may not prevent them from cheating, but it forces them to *undo the cut* - a difficult and dangerous move. Only world class cheats will undo a cut while being burned. Note: no other shuffling or cutting is allowed after EVERY player is offered the option of cutting. A cheat may bend the entire deck so as to reveal where the cut was, so that his confederate sitting to his left may undo the cut or he may do so himself should the appropriate distraction present itself.

Switching decks

This pales in comparison to the granddaddy of all cheating - the "**cold deck**". After all the shuffling and cutting has been done (everyone nicely pacified) the cheat can switch the deck for one he has stacked beforehand so that everyone has a real betting hand, but, of course, the cheat has the best one. Other versions of the "cold deck switch" utilize the cutting sequence to perform the "work." Any deck switch is difficult, and *may* require distraction, but once done, no other sleights are necessary to win. The only defense is to simply always watch the deck. Many players believe that it is bad luck to look at your cards before the dealer is finished as you might miss your opponents' reactions to their cards, and might miss burning the dealer.

Collusion

One of the easiest ways to cheat at [poker](#) is with a partner or many partners, called **collusion**. This is basically playing differently against one or more players than you do against others at the table (in contrast to mechanics, which is directly manipulating cards or chips in violation of the rules). The gravity of such cheating ranges from the subconscious to the conspiratorial. Some common forms of collusion are **soft play**, that is, failing to bet or raise in a situation that would normally merit it because of your opponent; **whipsawing**, where partners at opposite ends of the table raise and reraise each other to trap players in between; and **dumping**, or deliberately losing to a partner (perhaps someone you are backing financially or with whom you have traded a percentage stake). **Signalling** (that is, trading information between partners) is probably the most egregious example of such cheating, but all of these are considered bad play and should not be tolerated at any poker game.

In friendly games it is common to be playing against someone you know well. Perhaps your spouse may be playing at the game with the rest of your friends. Suddenly your luck turns for the worse. Subconsciously, you are less willing to take the money of the people you know or love. Perhaps one fellow has been getting bad hands all evening, and you know he has car payments to make, and this changes the game being played. The best advice is to leave friendship outside the poker game. Especially in [tournament poker](#), soft-playing a friend is cheating all of the other players out of their chance to see you bust your friend, getting them closer to the prize money.

For this reason, there are laws in some U.S. states saying that a husband and wife cannot play poker at the same table. Perhaps the easiest way to exploit such a situation is to agree to split the profits (after all, couples often have shared bank accounts). Even without any explicit collusion during the game, this reduces the variance of the team as a whole.

It should come as no surprise that two people sharing information about their hands enjoy a great advantage over the other players. If you do not believe this, deal out a few poker hands, but deal yourself two. The idea is that these players signal one another and only play the better of the two hands. Signals can take many forms, from the placement of the chips on the cards to Morse code tappings on the table. The key ingredient in all signaling systems is the ability to be repeated unobtrusively. In order for this advantage to make money it has to be done many times without someone realizing it. In a game where people (hopefully) are always watching each other, this can prove problematic. When a cheat is signaling the value of his hand to his partner, he is also signaling the value of his hand to everyone at the table. The result of a system of signals being figured out is nothing short of financial disaster. Some games are more susceptible to this kind of cheating than others: in [Five-card stud](#) and [Lowball](#), for example, signalling the rank of just one card can give another player sufficient information to make many otherwise difficult decisions.

Collusion in online poker is relatively easy and much more difficult to spot if executed well. The main reason is that the cheaters can engage in instant messaging discussing their cards with no one looking at them. Sometimes the same person can be using two or more computers and playing under different aliases. This gives him an advantage that's difficult to work against. However many poker rooms have imposed a maximum of one account per household, though a determined cheater can still bypass this by using multiple connections thus having different IP addresses. However, online poker sites keep records of every hand played, and collusion can often be detected by finding the appropriate pattern. Many sites also offer head-to-head (*heads-up*) games, where collusion is not useful.

Another concern in online poker is the use of software called "bots" (short for computer robots). These are programs that make decisions on behalf of the player based on odds etc. and also play on their behalf. Though their accuracy and ability has been questioned, it has nevertheless been seen as unfair practices by the poker room and has sought to ban them. With improvements in software and hardware it is expected that in the near future a bot that can beat a human consistently is a near certainty.

Should two people wanting to cheat be in close proximity, they might decide to hand-muck. That is, to switch hands or alter them in some way (though this particular form of cheating might be considered mechanics rather than collusion). A simple idea of this is to have two people sitting next to each other in a game of [draw poker](#). While they receive two mediocre hands, they could switch certain cards between themselves in order to form a worthless hand and a winner. There are many sleight of hand methods to this. Hand-mucking is also a problem in blackjack.

Perhaps the most odious way of cheating with a partner is to have a weekly game at your house, agreeing with all your regular players that you split the profit from cheating a single player. This hot-seat game invites a new player every week, only to play against six players all working together. The mechanics are the same, players signal their hands, then play proceeds as to drive the hot-seat out, or to put all his money in the pot.

If you are at a poker game and you detect that your opponents are cheating, but are not very good at it, you can use this information to your advantage. You may be better off exploiting their inept cheating than leaving or turning them in. Dr. Frank R. Wallace wrote a book on this, in which he coined the term *neocheating* (He later developed a philosophy called Neo-Tech. The book consists of 2 parts easy to spot cheating techniques (marking the deck, crimping cards, false cuts, etc) and 5 parts philosophical content and stories.

See also

- [Second dealing](#)

[Bottom dealing](#) | [Second dealing](#)

Bottom dealing

"**Bottom dealing**" is a form of cheating in [poker](#) and other card games. It consists of placing high cards on the bottom of the deck while shuffling and dealing those cards to yourself or your teammates. Bottom dealing is both easier to commit and easier to detect than [second dealing](#).

[Bottom dealers](#)

Bottom dealers

Bottom dealers are a breed of [poker](#) cheats who specialize in "bottom dealing."

Bottom dealing is a method of illegally influencing the outcome of a poker game by way of dealing from the bottom, rather than the top, of the [card](#) deck. Generally, a bottom dealer will sneak a peek at the bottom card of the deck just after or during the cut. With the knowledge of that card in mind, he can deal the card to himself or a confederate to help his or his buddy's hand, or deal it to someone else if he knows the card will not help the opponent (thereby preventing the opponent from improving his hand).

If you ever happen to catch a bottom dealer in action, your best bet is to walk away and alert the authorities. Confronting the cheat directly is a dangerous play, as he will not likely go down without a fight, and may be armed just in case anyone decides to question his integrity.

Second dealing

Second dealing is a method of illegally influencing the outcome of a [poker](#) game by way of dealing the second, rather than the top, [card](#) of the deck. Generally, a second dealer will sneak a peek at the second or first card of the deck just after or during the cut. With the knowledge of that (or those two) card(s) in mind, he can deal the second or first card to himself or a confederate to help his or his buddy's hand, or deal it to someone else if he knows the card will

NICOLAE SFETCU: POKER WORLD

not help the opponent (thereby preventing the opponent from improving his hand). The identity of the top card can also be determined by using marked (or pegged) cards.

Card sharps who specialize in this cheat are known as "second dealers."

Casino

A **casino** is a building that accommodates certain types of [gambling](#) games and activities. Customers may gamble by playing slot machines or other games of chance and some skill (e.g., craps, roulette—for more see [casino games](#)). Game rules usually have mathematically-determined odds that ensure the house retains an advantage over the players. This advantage is called the *edge*. *Payout* is the percentage given to players. In statistically-even games, such as poker, the house takes a commission (a "rake") on bets customers make against each other. Casinos are often placed near or combined with hotels, restaurants and other vacation attractions to encourage long stays.

The term originally meant a small villa, summerhouse or pavilion built for pleasure, usually on the grounds of a larger Italian villa or palazzo. There are examples of such casinos at Villa Giulia and Villa Farnese. During the 19th century, the term *casino* came to include other more public buildings where pleasurable activities, including gambling and sports, took place. An example of this type of building is the Newport Casino. Eventually this term in Italian now designates a bordello (also called "casa chiusa" literally "closed house"), while the gambling house is spelled *casinò* with an accent.

See also

- [Online casino](#)

[Public cardroom rules](#) | [Public cardroom etiquette](#) | [Video poker](#) | [Casino table games](#) | [Online casino](#)

Public cardroom rules

People can play poker at public cardrooms. While the rules of the tables can change from [casino](#) to [casino](#), most have similar rules and regulations.

Records

Some casinos keep records of the players at each table. This is done to help manage limited table space. During peak periods (Friday night), there may be a waiting list for poker seats. Players can get on multiple waiting lists (different types of games and money amounts) to help secure a space.

Chips

Some casinos will players buy their chips at the table, while others require players to have them already exchanged from the cashier elsewhere in the casino.

Betting

Betting rules at each casino vary based on blinds and [antes](#). In some games, not everyone antes every hand, thus making it possible to fold early for "free".

The betting system used by most casinos is what is commonly called "blind tiger". In hold'em, the player to the left of the imaginary dealer (signified by a button) places a small blind bet regardless of his hand. Then, the player to the left of the small blind places a big blind bet. The blind amounts vary: an example would be \$3 for the small blind and \$6 for the big blind. The person to the left of the big blind would then start the betting; he would have to either match the big blind bet or raise to a larger amount.

In Stud, everyone places a small ante after getting their starting cards. Then, the player with the low exposed card usually has a forced initial bet. The ante is a smaller amount than the bet of the person with the low card (about 40% of a betting unit). Resulting players would have to match that bet or raise to a larger amount.

The maximum betting or raising amounts depend on the limits placed in. In limit poker, a player can only raise the amount of the big blind initially. The maximum amount of raises per street (card placed by dealer) is usually 3 to 4. The betting or raising amount usually doubles in later streets.

With no-limit poker, a person can bet the total number of chips he has at the table at any time. In pot-limit poker, a person can bet as much as the amount of chips at the pot.

Profitability of poker for casinos

Casinos make a relatively slim profit margin on the game. Whereas slot machines provide a substantial house percentage, poker tables require dealers, waitresses, cigarette girls, and a manager to keep everything running smoothly. The house supports this with a "rake" (a percentage taken from every pot). This can range from 5%-10%; usually with higher rake games, a limit is placed on how much the house can rake (10% with a limit of \$5).

With the recent upsurge in poker's popularity, more casinos offer live poker. They make money both from the rake and from attracting people to the casino, where they may play other games (craps, roulette, etc.)

See also : [Poker](#)

[Cards speak](#) | [The Saddle](#) | [Ring game](#)

Cards speak

In the game of [poker](#), the term **cards speak** ("for themselves") is used in two contexts:

First, it is used to describe a [High-low split](#) game without a [declaration](#). That is, in a cards speak game, players all reveal their hands at the showdown, and whoever has the highest hand wins the high half of the pot and whoever has the lowest hand wins the low half.

The other context is a key rule in [casino](#) poker rooms. "Cards speak" means that any verbal declaration as to the content of a player's hand is not binding. If Mary says she has no pair, but in fact she has a flush, her cards speak and her hand is viewed for its genuine value, that of a flush. Likewise if John says he has a flush, but in fact he does not, his hand is judged on its actual

merits, not his verbal declaration. At the discretion of management, any player miscalling his hand may have that hand fouled, but this is not required.

The "cards speak" rule does not address the awarding of a pot, player responsibilities, or the one player to a hand rule. It merely means that verbal statements do not make a hand value. The cards do.

The Saddle

The Saddle is slang for a poker table's fourth seat.

Seats are numbered starting on the casino dealer's left.

The Saddle is believed by some to be the best seat at a poker table because it has the best view of the action.

Poker anti-legend Justin Draughn is known for always sitting in the Saddle.

Ring game

In [poker](#), a "live" game played with "real" chips and money, usually with no predetermined end time. Players may freely buy into or cash out of a ring game between hands.

In "no limit" poker ring games, there is normally a maximum buy-in for ring games that prevents players from buying a chip stack size advantage. In limit poker games, there is seldom a maximum buy-in because betting limits on each hand already limit the advantage of having a larger chip stack.

Contrast this to a [poker tournament](#), which is played with tournament chips (worth nothing outside the tournament) with a definite end condition (usually, only one player left).

In a casino, rake is usually taken from a pot if the player is in a hand while a flop is shown.

Public cardroom etiquette

Etiquette in a public cardroom is fairly simple.

- A simple faux pas is to not act in accordance with the cardroom's rules. For example, to raise, one typically places all the chips, those to call (if any) and the raise in one motion; you cannot do two hand gestures (this is called a string raise), unless you state your intentions prior to placing chips.
- Cards are to be face-down to other players until showdown. If you fold, you hand in your cards face-down. If you are in the hand until showdown, you turn up your cards if either you are first to show (last person to raise shows first) or if your hand is superior to the hands previously exposed. Do not expose cards

prior to showdown; depending on local rules, this may mean a commitment to check all raises or you may forfeit the hand.

- If you are requested to cease an activity by a dealer or any other representative of the cardroom, cease that activity.
- Damaging cards is both fairly difficult (because most places use cellulose-acetate cards which are hard to mark, scratch, and bend, and last approximately five years in daily play) and forbidden.
- Don't blame the dealer for a string of bad hands. Don't ask the dealer to "switch decks". This may annoy the other players and it will slow down gameplay.
- Speak only English in an American cardroom. If they can't understand you, they may assume you are in collusion with someone.
- Turn off your cell phone, or set it to vibrate mode. Do not pick it up during game play. If you pick it up, there's the possibility you are receiving information that may provide a clue to the other players' hands, and are therefore cheating.
- Keep your food and drinks off the table. The table is for playing cards and poker chips, not soda pop and potato chips. You have small stands around the tables to hold beverages and food. Food at the table, though, is not recommended if it leaves a residue on your hands. Sandwiches OK, BBQ ribs and fried chicken, no.
- Cheating is right out. Having said that, do not accuse other players of being cheaters. If you are wrong (most likely), you will make an unnecessary scene and end up tossed from the room. If you're right, the cameras above you will catch the guy in the act for you.
- You cannot buy more chips while a round is in progress.
- Failing to call out, "all-in" when you are is a minor issue.
- All your chips must remain on the table during play. You may not remove chips from the table to your pockets, or vice versa.
- Remember when you must pay forced bets, such as blinds in [Texas Hold 'em](#) and [Omaha Hold 'em](#).
- Keep the game play flowing. By the time the bet comes round to you, you should know what your course of action is. Calling for "time" when you have a difficult decision to make is acceptable as long as you don't take excessively long or do this very often.
- Remember, the cards speak for themselves. When the hand is over, don't overstate your hand in an effort to cause an opponent to throw away a better hand. Also, don't throw away your own hand until your opponent shows a better hand; he might not have read this etiquette page, and could be lying about having a straight flush. The dealer is the adjudicator of each round.
- Knocking the table is a check, tossing your cards is a fold. Saying "Check" or knocking the table is the same thing. Placing your chips down without a spoken amount commits you to the full value of the laid chips or the table maximum, whichever applies. Calling a raise means following through.
- The most important thing: NEVER EVER PLAY WITH MONEY YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE.

Video poker

Video poker is a [casino game](#) which is based loosely on [five-card draw poker](#). It is played on a computerized console which is a similar size to a slot machine.

History

Video poker first became commercially viable once it was economical to combine a television-like monitor with a solid state central processing unit. The earliest models appeared at the same time as the first personal computers were produced, in the mid-1970s, although they were rather primitive by today's standards.

Video poker became more firmly established when IGT (now a market-leading provider of gaming devices) brought out *Draw Poker* in 1979. Throughout the 1980s, video poker became increasingly popular, as people found the devices less intimidating than playing at the [tables](#). Today, video poker enjoys a prominent place on the gaming floors of many casinos, and the game is especially popular with Las Vegas locals, who tend to patronize properties off the Las Vegas Strip for the better odds offered by those establishments.

Operation of the game

Game play begins by placing a bet of one or more credits, by inserting money (or in newer machines, a barcoded paper ticket with credit) into the machine, and then pressing a "Deal" button to draw cards. The player is then given an opportunity to keep or discard one or more of the cards in exchange for a new card drawn from the same virtual deck, after which the machine evaluates the hand and offers a payout if the hand matches one of the winning hands in the posted pay schedule.

On a typical video poker machine, payouts start with a minimum hand of a pair of jacks. Pay schedules allocate the payout for hands based partially upon how rare they are, and also based upon the total theoretical return the game operator chooses to offer.

Some machines offer progressive jackpots for the [royal flush](#), (and sometimes for other rare hands as well), thereby spurring players to both play more coins and to play more frequently.

Regulation

Video poker machines operated in state-regulated jurisdictions are programmed to deal random card sequences. A series of cards is generated for each play; five dealt straight to the hand, the other five dealt in order if requested by player. This is due to a Nevada regulation, adopted by every other state with a gaming authority, that if dice or cards are used for an electronic game, the electronic versions must be as random as the real thing, within computational limits set by certain tests that are performed by gaming authority agents. It is unclear whether all video poker machines at Indian gaming establishments are subject to the same Nevada-style regulations, as Indian casinos are located on property that is sovereign to the tribe which holds the gaming license.

Newer versions of the software no longer deal out all 10 cards at once. They now deal out the first five cards, and then when the draw button is pressed, they generate a second set of cards based on the remaining 47 cards in the deck. This was done after players found a way to reverse-engineer the RNG cycle from sample hands and were able to predict the hidden cards in advance.

Kinds of Video Poker

Newer video poker machines may employ variants of the basic five-card draw. Typical variations include: Deuces Wild, where a two can serve as a [wild card](#) and a jackpot is paid for four deuces or a natural royal; pay schedule modification, where four aces with a five or smaller kicker pays an enhanced amount (these games usually have some adjective in the title such as "bonus", "double", or "triple"); and multi-play poker, where the player starts with a base hand of five cards, and each additional played hand draws from a different set of cards with the base hand removed. (Multi-play games are offered in "Triple Play", "Five Play", "Ten Play", "Fifty Play" and even "One Hundred Play" versions.)

In the non-wild games (games which do not have a wild card) a player who plays five or six hundred hands per hour, on average, may receive the rare four-of-a-kind approximately once per hour, while a player may play for many days or weeks before receiving an extremely rare royal flush.

Full Pay Games

When certain pay schedules are offered by a video poker machine, players using perfect or near perfect strategy can obtain greater than 100% payback over a sufficiently long period of play. These machines are referred to as "full pay" machines. Casinos place full pay machines alongside other machines with pay schedules that offer a negative return, so it is up to the player to properly identify which video poker machines offer the full pay schedules.

Most full pay machines are configured with a pay schedule that is only full pay when the maximum amount of credits is bet. (See the pay schedule tables later in this article for details.)

Deuces Wild

One variation of video poker, called "Deuces Wild", can be found with pay schedules that offer up to a theoretical return of 100.762%, when played with perfect strategy. It is also available with other pay schedules that have lesser theoretical returns:

| Hand | 1 credit | 2 credits | 3 credits | 4 credits | 5 credits |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Natural Royal Flush | 300 | 600 | 900 | 1200 | 4000* |
| Four Deuces | 200 | 400 | 600 | 800 | 1000 |
| Wild Royal Flush | 25 | 50 | 75 | 100 | 125 |
| Five of a Kind | 15 | 30 | 45 | 60 | 75 |
| Straight Flush | 9 | 18 | 27 | 36 | 45 |
| Four of a Kind | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 |
| Full House | 3 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 15 |
| Flush | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Straight | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Three of a Kind | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Theoretical Return | 99.679% | 99.679% | 99.679% | 99.679% | 100.762%* |

- *Notice the gap between the payoff for a Natural Royal Flush played with 4 credits vs. one with 5 credits. The payoff schedule for most video poker machines has a gap like this, such that players who do not play with the maximum number of credits at a time are playing with a negative theoretical return.

Double Bonus

Another variation of video poker, called "Double Bonus", can be found with pay schedules that offer up to a theoretical return of 100.1725%, when played with perfect strategy. It is also available with other pay schedules that have lesser theoretical returns:

| Hand | 1 credit | 2 credits | 3 credits | 4 credits | 5 credits |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Royal Flush | 250 | 500 | 750 | 1000 | 4000* |
| Straight Flush | 50 | 100 | 150 | 200 | 250 |
| Four Aces | 160 | 320 | 480 | 640 | 800 |
| Full House | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 |
| Flush | 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 | 35 |
| Straight | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 |
| Three of a Kind | 3 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 15 |
| Two Pair | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Jacks or Better | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Theoretical Return | 99.1079% | 99.1079% | 99.1079% | 99.1079% | 100.1725%* |

- *Notice the gap between the payoff for a Royal Flush played with 4 credits vs. one with 5 credits. Players who do not play with the maximum number of credits at a time are playing with a negative theoretical return.

Double Double Bonus

Another variation of video poker, called "Double Double Bonus", can be found with pay schedules that offer up to a theoretical return of 100.067%, when played with perfect strategy. It is also available with other pay schedules that have lesser theoretical returns:

| Hand | 1 credit | 2 credits | 3 credits | 4 credits | 5 credits |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Royal Flush | 250 | 500 | 750 | 1000 | 4000* |
| Straight Flush | 50 | 100 | 150 | 200 | 250 |
| Four Aces w/2, 3, or 4 | 400 | 800 | 1200 | 1600 | 2000 |
| Four 2, 3, or 4 w/A-4 | 160 | 320 | 480 | 640 | 800 |
| Four Aces | 160 | 320 | 480 | 640 | 800 |
| Four 2, 3, or 4 | 80 | 160 | 240 | 320 | 400 |
| Four 5-K | 50 | 100 | 150 | 200 | 250 |
| Full House | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 |
| Flush | 6 | 12 | 18 | 24 | 30 |
| Straight | 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 20 |
| Three of a Kind | 3 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 15 |
| Two Pair | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Jacks or Better | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Theoretical Return | 98.9154% | 98.9154% | 98.9154% | 98.9154% | 100.067%* |

- *Notice the gap between the payoff for a Royal Flush played with 4 credits vs. one with 5 credits. Players who do not play with the maximum number of credits at a time are playing with a negative theoretical return.

Other Full Pay Games

Other kinds of video poker only have positive theoretical returns when the progressive jackpot is high enough. Many establishments advertise with a billboard when the progressive jackpot is high enough.

Locating Full Pay Games

Although full pay video poker machines are found in many "locals" casinos (located off the Strip) in the Las Vegas market (and in a few Reno casinos), most Strip casinos and casinos in other markets only offer video poker pay schedules with a negative theoretical return.

The maximum bet size is kept fairly small on video poker machines with a full pay schedule (one dollar or less), which makes it impractical to win a large amount of money over any reasonable period of time.

Player's Clubs

Many casinos offer free memberships in "player's clubs" or "slot clubs", which return a small percentage of the amount of money that is bet in the form of "comps" (complementary food, drinks, hotel rooms, or merchandise), or sometimes as cash back (sometimes with a restriction that the cash be redeemed at a later date). These clubs require that players use a card that is inserted into the video poker machine to allow the casino to track the player's "action" (how much the player bets and for how long), which is often used to establish a level of play that may make a player eligible for additional comps.

Comps or cash back from these clubs can make a significant difference in the theoretical return when playing video poker over a long period of time. In some cases, usage of a club card can even add enough value to the pay schedule of a video poker game with a negative theoretical return to make that same game have a positive theoretical return.

Casino table games

[Caribbean stud poker](#) | [Pai gow poker](#) | [Chinese poker](#) | [Three card poker](#) | [Four card poker](#) | [Let it ride](#) | [Pyramid poker](#)

Caribbean stud poker

Caribbean stud poker is a [casino](#) table game with rules similar to five card stud [poker](#). However, unlike standard poker games, Caribbean stud is played against the house rather than against other players (and, like most such games, it cannot be beaten in the long run). There is no bluffing or other deception. For these reasons, most poker players do not consider it to be a form of poker. (They do not necessarily feel that it should not be called poker, but means merely that they will not refer to it as simply "poker". For instance, a gambler might say "I played poker" if he played [seven card stud](#), but probably would not if he played Caribbean stud.)

The following rules are typical of U.S. casinos, but some of the details (the payouts and limits) vary from casino to casino.

To play, every player places his ante on the layout where indicated; all ante wagers must be placed prior to the dealer announcing "*No more bets*". Each player and the dealer will then

receive 5 cards, face down. The dealer will turn over one of his cards, then push the cards toward the players, after which the players may look at their cards. They may only look at their own cards, and may not discuss what they have with any other player at the table.

Players have the option to play or fold; if they choose to play, they place their bets (twice the amount of their respective ante) in the bet box. If they choose to fold, they forfeit their ante. After all the players have made their decisions, the dealer reveals his hole cards. The dealer only plays with an ace/king or higher; he then compares his cards to the players' cards (individually, right to left), and the best poker hand wins.

There are some major rules in Caribbean Stud Poker that *must* be observed at all times while playing:

- Only one hand per player. Players cannot hold or wager on multiple hands at the table.
- Players choosing to play the Progressive Payout feature are responsible for ensuring their \$1 wager has been inserted into slot and the "Indicator Light" is ON.
- Players may not exchange or communicate information regarding their hands to other players or the dealer. Player violation will result in a dead hand and forfeiture of all wagers.
- Incorrect amount of cards to the player constitutes a dead hand (or push) for that player only.
- The decision of the table/casino supervisor is final.
- If the dealer is dealt four cards of the five-card hand, the dealer shall deal an additional card to complete the hand. Any other misdeal to the dealer shall result in all hands being void and the cards shall be reshuffled.
- Each player shall be required to keep the five cards in full view of the dealer at all times. Once each player has examined his or her cards and placed them face down on the layout, they may not touch the cards again.
- If a hole card is exposed prior to the dealer announcing *No More Bets*, all hands shall be void.

If a player's cards beat the dealer's cards, the player will receive even money (1-1) on the ante, and the following on his bet (with a maximum payout of \$5,000 U.S. Dollars per hand on each bet wager):

Royal flush 100 to 1

Straight flush 50 to 1

Four of a kind 20 to 1

Full house 7 to 1

Flush 5 to 1

Straight 4 to 1

Three of a kind 3 to 1

Two pair 2 to 1

One pair or less 1 to 1

If the dealer does not have at least ace/king, all bet wagers will be void, and players will receive even money on their ante bet only. If the dealer's cards beat a player's cards, the dealer collects both the ante and bet.

In addition, in Caribbean stud poker, players can also bet on their poker hands and win the "progressive feature"; this is done by dropping a 1.00 dollar gaming chip into the chip acceptor on the table after placing the ante. Players with a flush or higher win, regardless of the outcome of their table bets:

Royal Flush 100% of Progressive Meter

Straight Flush 10% of Progressive Meter

Four-of-a-Kind \$500

Full House \$100

Flush \$50

Winning progressive payout hands are paid in accordance with the amount on the meter when it is the player's turn to be paid. However, if more than one player at a table has a royal flush progressive payout hand, each player shares equally in the amount on the meter when the first player with a royal flush is to be paid.

Caribbean Stud Poker in the United Kingdom

Caribbean Stud Poker differs slightly in the United Kingdom, and most parts of Europe, from the US. The game is officially known as "Casino Five Card Stud Poker", and not all casinos have the jackpot prize. Those which do have the prize, usually the large chain groups, officially call the game "Casino Jackpot Five Card Stud Poker". In both instances, the game is commonly referred to as "Casino Stud Poker".

The basic rules are the same in the UK as the US, although the payouts differ - the maximum bet is generally £100 on the ante and £200 on the raise, and all payouts are paid on the raise, meaning the maximum payout can potentially be £10,000 (a Royal Flush pays at the same odds, 50:1, as a Straight Flush).

Casinos offering the jackpot generally have the card shuffled by a card shuffling machine - the cards are then removed and dealt out by the dealer, or croupier. Independent and small casinos generally have the croupier shuffle the cards by hand.

British casinos do not use the chip dropper system; instead, a £1 chip is placed on a small plastic circle on the table, which lights up. The croupier then presses a button on a panel in front

of them, which keeps the lights lit up once the chips are removed. The dealer removes the chips, and can then tell which players are playing the jackpot game and which are not.

If the dealer does not show an Ace/King, hands playing the jackpot must be turned over, face up, and shown to the dealer and table. If the player is not playing the jackpot prize, the cards are not shown.

See also

- [Poker](#) for other types of Poker games.

Pai gow poker

Pai gow poker, or double-hand poker, is an Americanized version of Pai Gow, in that Pai Gow Poker is played with [playing cards](#) using [poker](#) hand rankings while Pai Gow is played with Chinese dominoes.

The game is played with a standard 52-card deck, plus a single joker. It is played on a table set for six players plus the dealer.

Each player is playing against the banker, who may be the casino dealer or one of the other players at the table.

Object of the Game

The object of the game is to create two poker hands out of the seven cards in your hand: A five-card poker hand and a two-card poker hand. The five-card hand must rank higher than your two-card hand. The two-card hand is often called the hand "in front" or "on top", and the five-card hand is called the hand "behind" or "bottom", as they are placed that way in front of the player when he is done setting them.

The Deal

The cards are shuffled, and then dealt to the table in seven face-down piles of seven cards, with four cards unused, regardless of the number of people playing.

Betting positions are assigned a number from 1 to 7, starting with whichever player is acting as banker that hand, and counting counter-clockwise around the table. A random number from 1 to 7 is determined (either electronically or manually with dice), and the deal begins with that assigned position and proceeds counter-clockwise.

One common way of using dice to determine the dealer starting number is to roll three six-sided dice, then count betting spots clockwise from the first until the number on the dice is reached.

If a player is not sitting on a particular spot, the hand is still assigned but then placed in the discards with the four unused cards.

Hand Rankings

The only two-card hands are one pair and high cards; no straights, flushes, and so on. The joker plays as a bug: that is, in the five-card hand it can be used to complete a straight or flush, if possible; otherwise it is an ace. In the two-card hand, it always plays as an ace. Five-card hands use standard [poker hand rankings](#), with one exception: in most Nevada casinos, the hand **A-2-3-4-5** ranks above a king-high straight, but below the ace-high straight **A-K-Q-J-10**. In California & Michigan, this rule doesn't apply. The **A-2-3-4-5** is the lowest possible straight.

Determining a Win

If each of your now-separated hands beats the banker's corresponding hand, then you win your bet. If only one of your hands beats the banker, then you push. If both of your hands lose to the banker, then you lose.

On each individual hand, ties go to the banker (for example, if your five-card hand loses to the banker and your two-card hand ties him, you lose). This gives the banker a small advantage. If you foul your hand, meaning that your low hand outranks your high hand or that there are an incorrect number of cards in each hand, there will be a penalty, either re-arrangement of the hand according to house rules or forfeiture of the hand.

In casino-banked games, the banker is generally required to set their hand in a pre-specified manner called "house way", so the dealer does not have to implement any strategy in order to beat the players. When a player is banking, he is free to set the hand however he chooses. However, the player has the option of "co-banking" with the house, and if this option is chosen, the player's hand must also be set the house way.

California casinos typically charge a flat fee per hand, such as 50 cents or one dollar, to play, win or lose. Other casinos take out of winnings a 5% commission. While this seems high, it should be noted that a hand of Pai Gow poker takes a long time to play compared to, say, blackjack, and there are many pushes, so the house doesn't collect that 5% as often as it would collect the house percentage on other games.

Basic Strategy

Generally speaking, one should try to set the highest two-card hand that you can legally set (that is, the best two-card hand that still leaves a higher five-card hand behind). More specifically, one should expect and "average" hand to be something like a medium-to-high pair behind in the five-card hand and an ace-high in front. Detailed computer analysis has been done to determine ideal strategy, but this requires memorizing large tables. A close approximation can be done with only a few rules of thumb. If you are playing in a casino, you can always ask that your hand be set "house way" if you are in doubt; most house strategies are quite reasonable and can be quite close to optimal strategy.

- If you have no pair, no straights, and no flushes, set the second- and third-highest cards in your two-card hand. For example, with **K-Q-J-9-7-4-3**, play **Q-J** and **K-9-7-4-3**. There are a few minor exceptions to this (for example, with **A-Q-**

10-9-5-4-2 it is slightly better to play **Q-9** and **A-10-5-4-2**), but these are rare and don't affect your win rate much.

- If you have nothing but a single pair, set it in your five-card hand and put the two highest remaining cards in your two-card hand. For example, with **A-Q-Q-9-6-5-3**, play **A-9** and **Q-Q-6-5-3**. There are no exceptions to this rule. This rule and the rule above will cover 90% of the hands you play.
- Two pair is the most common case where strategy isn't obvious. You can either play the high pair behind and small pair in front, or else two pair behind and high cards in front. The smaller your high pair and higher your remaining cards, the more you should be inclined to play two pair behind. If your side cards are small, or your larger pair is large, split the pairs. You should *always* split pairs if your high pair is aces, and almost always split if your high pair is kings or queens; they are high enough by themselves. With something like **J-J-4-4-A-Q-5** you can consider playing **A-Q** and **J-J-4-4-5-**, since **A-Q** in front is not much worse than **4-4**, but two pair behind is much better than a single pair of jacks. Jacks and tens might be more inclined to split, because tens in front is *much* better than **A-Q**. With pairs as small as 7s and 8s, you might consider playing two pair behind if you can play a king-high or better in front. With 2s and 3s, you might even play as little as a queen-high in front. If you have no side cards higher than a jack, *always* split pairs, even 2s and 3s. (Most house ways split if there's a pair of 6s or higher, and split small pairs if there's no Ace for the low hand.)
- Three pair is a very good hand. *Always* play the highest pair in front, no exceptions. For example, with **K-K-7-7-4-4-A**, play **K-K** and **7-7-4-4-A**.
- If you have three of a kind and nothing else, play three of a kind behind and remaining high cards in front, unless they are aces--*always* split three aces, playing a pair of aces behind and ace-high in front. Occasionally, you can even split three kings if your remaining side cards are not queen-high (for example, with **K-K-K-J-9-7-6**, it is slightly better to play **K-J** and **K-K-9-7-6** than to play **J-9** and **K-K-K-7-6**). Most house ways only split three Aces.
- If you can play a straight or a flush or both, play whichever straight-or-better five-card hand makes the best two-card hand. For example, with **KS-9S-8C-7S-6C-5S-4S**, playing the flush would put **8-6** in front, playing the 9-high straight would put **K-4** up front, but the correct play is **K-9** and **8-7-6-5-4**. Occasionally, you will have a straight or flush with two pair; in that case, play as if it were two pair and ignore the straight or flush. This rule applies even if you can play a straight flush: if a straight or flush makes a better hand in front, play it that way.
- With a full house, generally play trips behind and the pair in front. The exception is if the pair is very small and your side cards are very high, for example, with **5-5-5-3-3-A-Q**, it might be better to play **A-Q** with the full house behind. These are rare, though, and you will never be making a big mistake if you never play a full house behind. House ways will always split the full house.

- With two sets of trips, play the higher as a pair in front, and the smaller trips behind. For example, with **Q-Q-Q-7-7-7-A**, play **Q-Q** and **7-7-7-A-Q**. No exceptions.
- With four of a kind, play as if it were two pair, but be slightly less inclined to split. For example, with **10-10-10-10-J-5-4**, play **10-10** and **10-10-J-5-4**; with **3-3-3-3-K-Q-7**, play **K-Q** and **3-3-3-3-7**. Most house ways always split the four of a kind.
- With three pair and a straight or flush (only possible with the joker), play as three pair (aces in front).

The cases below will probably never happen to you, but just in case:

- With four of a kind and a pair, play the pair in front unless it is very small *and* the four of a kind is very large. For example, with **9-9-9-9-7-7-K**, play **7-7** and **9-9-9-9-K**, but with **Q-Q-Q-Q-3-3-9**, you might play **Q-Q** and **Q-Q-3-3-9**. House ways always put the quartet in back and the pair in front.
- With a full house and a pair, play the higher pair in front and a full house in back.
- With four of a kind and trips, split the four to play a pair in front and full house behind. House ways will tend to break the trips.
- With all four aces and the joker, play a pair of aces in front and three aces (or a full house) behind UNLESS your back pair is a pair of kings; you get the honor of gloating on this one.

Chinese poker

Chinese poker is a card game that has been played in the Asian community for many years. It has begun to gain popularity in the broader world of game players because it has all the features of a good gambling game:

- It is easy to learn.
- Anyone who knows the rank of Poker hands can begin playing after a few minutes of instruction.
- There is a large element of luck, so that a beginner has a real chance of winning, even against experienced opponents. Also, it is plausible for poor players to attribute bad results to their cards rather than their plays.
- There is still enough skill in the game that experts have a significant advantage when playing poor players.

Although it is basically a four player game, it plays well with 2, 3, 5, or even more players. It is fun to play. Unexpected results and interesting hands are common.

Playing a Hand

In Chinese Poker, each player receives a 13 card hand from a standard 52 card deck. He then has to divide his cards into three Poker hands, two containing five cards each and one three card hand. The only restriction is that **both five card hands must outrank the three card hand** (Note: straights and flushes do not count in the three card hand). The higher ranking of the five

card hands, called the Back hand, is placed face down on the table in front of the player. Then the other five card hand, called the Middle hand, is placed face down in front of the Back hand. Finally, the three card hand, called the Front hand, is placed (again face down) in front of the middle hand. When all four players have set their hands, the cards are turned face up and the deal is scored.

Scoring

Many variations of scoring are in common use. Refer to the external links for more information.

Three card poker

Three Card Poker also called **Tricard poker** is a [poker-based game](#) that has recently become somewhat popular in American [casinos](#). It actually consists of two separate games, *Pairplus* and *Ante and Play*. The players can choose to play either or both of the games.

Pairplus

Pairplus is a simple bet on the [cards](#) with a payout for all hands of a [pair](#) or better. Below are six examples of actual payout tables used by some [casinos](#).

| Payoff Tables for Pairplus | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Hand | Table 1 | Table 2 | Table 3 | Table 4 | Table 5 | Table 6 |
| Straight flush | 40 to 1 | 40 to 1 | 35 to 1 | 50 to 1 | 40 to 1 | 40 to 1 |
| Three of a kind | 30 to 1 | 25 to 1 | 25 to 1 | 30 to 1 | 30 to 1 | 30 to 1 |
| Straight | 6 to 1 | 6 to 1 | 6 to 1 | 6 to 1 | 5 to 1 | 6 to 1 |
| Flush | 4 to 1 | 4 to 1 | 4 to 1 | 3 to 1 | 4 to 1 | 3 to 1 |
| Pair | 1 to 1 |

The house advantage on *Pairplus* with the payout tables above ranges from 2.3% to 7.3%.

Ante and Play

Normal Ante and Play gameplay

For **Ante and Play**, the player places an "ante" bet before receiving his cards. With this information, the player can [fold](#) his cards and lose the ante bet, or [raise](#) by placing out a bet of equal money to the ante bet. If he chooses to play, there are three possibilities. The first is that

the dealer does not 'qualify'. To qualify, the dealer must have a [hand](#) of a Queen High or better. If the dealer does not qualify, the ante bet is paid out even money, but the play bet is simply returned. If the dealer does qualify, the player wins if his hand is of higher value than the dealer's, and gets paid out even money on both his ante and play bets. If the dealer's hand is of higher value, the dealer takes the Ante and Play bets. Rules vary on what happens when the hands are of exactly equal value: some say that the player simply gets his money back, but others say that the player is paid even money on his bet.

The Ante Bonus

In addition to normal Ante and Play gameplay, there is a bonus payout on the ante bet for especially good hands.

| Ante Bonus Payouts | | | | |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Hand | Table 1 | Table 2 | Table 3 | Table 4 |
| Straight flush | 5 to 1 | 4 to 1 | 3 to 1 | 5 to 1 |
| Three of a kind | 4 to 1 | 3 to 1 | 2 to 1 | 3 to 1 |
| Straight | 1 to 1 | 1 to 1 | 1 to 1 | 1 to 1 |

These bonus payouts are paid only on the ante bet for any player who chooses to play, regardless of whether the dealer qualifies or whether the player wins or loses.

Four card poker

Four card poker is a relatively new [casino](#) game similar to [three card poker](#), invented by Roger Snow and owned by ShuffleMaster [\[1\]](#).

The player makes an ante bet and may also make an 'Aces Up' bet.

Five playing cards are dealt to the player who has to make the best four-card hand possible.

The dealer is dealt five cards face down, and one card face up, a total of six cards. He also has to make the best four-card hand.

After seeing his cards and the dealer's face-up card, the player can opt to fold, in which case he receives nothing, or play, by betting between one and three times his ante.

The best four-card hands for player and dealer will be compared according to the following ranking (from best worst):

four-of-a-kind

straight flush

three of a kind
 flush
 straight
 two pairs
 pair
 high card

If the player has three-of-a-kind or better, he will receive a bonus based on the ante wager as follows: three-of-a-kind: 2 to 1, straight flush 20 - 1, four of a kind 25-1.

The Aces Up bet is resolved independently of the dealer's hand, purely on the rank of the player's payout. The specific payout depends on the payout in use, with payouts for a pair-of-aces (pays even money on the Aces Up wager) or better.

The dealer has an advantage in having an extra card from which to select the best four, and the fact that if the player folds, he will lose his ante, even if his hand was better than the dealers. The player gets return from the bonus bet payment and from the ability to raise by more than one unit one the hand is good.

Strategy for when to raise and fold is fairly complex, but with optimal play the ante + play bet has a house edge of about 3.36% of the initial bet [2].

Let it ride

Let It Ride is a [card game](#) derived from [poker](#), generally played in casinos. Due to the slow pace of the game and the chance to pull back 2 of the 3 bets, it is a favorite of older players and those new to table games. Most casino dealers hate the slow pace (i.e., lack of tips) and unofficially refer to the game as "Let It Die." The name and logo are copyright Shuffle Master Inc.

Basic rules

Let it ride poker was designed to offer casino guests an opportunity to control two of their three bets wagered on a poker game. The game is based on the five card stud poker game, and is generally easy to learn. The players do not play against the dealer or any other player.

Payout schedule

Hand Payout

[Royal flush](#) 1,000 to 1

[Straight flush](#) 200 to 1

[Four of a kind](#) 50 to 1

Full house 11 to 1

Flush 8 to 1

Straight 5 to 1

Three of a kind 3 to 1

Two pair 2 to 1

Pair of 10's or better 1 to 1

How to Play

Bets

All bets must be placed prior to the dealer announcing "no more bets." Each player places three equal bets in the spaces indicated (1)(2) (\$).

The deal

Each player and the dealer receives three cards face down.

The play

You are not playing against the dealers or the other players. You are simply trying to get the best possible poker hand by using your three cards and two community cards, which the dealer will expose.

Each player is required to keep the three cards in full view of the dealer at all times.

The winners are paid according to the payout schedule (pair of 10's or better, two pair, etc.). After looking at his three cards, each player will be asked by the dealer if he wishes to take back bet number 1 or "let it ride."

The dealer, after burning the community card to his left, turns up one community card. Each player will be asked by the dealer if he wants to take back bet number 2 or "let it ride." After each player has made a decision regarding bet number 2, each player's cards will be placed face down on the designated area of the layout and they may not touch the cards again.

The dealer then turns up the second community card and in a counterclockwise direction, turns the three cards of each player face up. After all losing wagers have been collected, all winning hands are paid by the dealer, according to the payout schedule.

Regardless of the decision made concerning the first or second bets, a player may not take back the third bet.

Players are not allowed to show their hands to the other players, as this gives them an advantage by increasing their chances of knowing what cards the dealer is likely to turn up.

Pyramid poker

Pyramid poker is a new casino table game. It is a simplified version of [pai gow poker](#), where instead of seven cards 3 cards are dealt face down. It uses a standard 52 card deck without jokers. The hand rankings are just like in [poker](#) except that aces are always high. The dealer deals the player and himself 3 cards, which are arranged into a 2 card hand and a 1 card hand which should be smaller than the 2-card hand. There are no [straights](#) or [flushes](#) in the 2-card hand, and a higher ranked hand wins in both the hands. In order to win, both the hands of the player have to be higher than the dealer's hands. If only one hand is higher and the other loses, then the bet is a tie or push. The player loses his bet if the dealer wins both ways. All copies (equal face value) shall go to the dealer giving the advantage to the house. There is also the "House Way" in this poker variant that adds more variety.

Online casino

Online casinos, also known as **virtual casinos**, are the online version of land-based ("brick and mortar") [casinos](#). They allow you to play [casino games](#) through the Internet. Some online casinos provide various games, while others only provide only one type of game. [Online poker](#) is also very popular and there are many dedicated companies that provide this activity.

Online casinos can for certain games offer better odds than land casinos on slots and other formats where the chance of winning is determined by the house. Table games like blackjack have an established house edge; for a given set of rules, they offer the same payout, online or offline. Reliability and trust are hard to establish. To solve this issue, many online casinos purchase their software from well-known companies such as Wager Works, Microgaming, Playtech and Cryptologic, though a little research into credentials of any e-commerce site you plan to use is common sense. These software companies use a random number generator to ensure that the numbers, cards or dice appear randomly. All reputable companies operating in a regulated environment use robust random number generators.

Legality

See [online gambling](#) for a discussion of the legality of playing at an online casino.

Casino types

Online casinos can be divided into two groups based on their interface: web-based casinos and download-based casinos. Some casinos offer more than one interface.

Web-based online casinos

Web-based online casinos are websites where users may directly play casino games without loading any software to the local computer. Games are mainly represented in the browser plugins Macromedia Flash, Macromedia Shockwave, or Java and require browser support for mentioned plugins. Also, bandwidth is needed since all graphics, sounds and animations are loaded through the web via the plugin. A very small number of casinos allow games played through a plain HTML interface.

Download-based online casinos

Download-based online casinos are the most common casino web sites. On these websites, users have to download certain software to play casino games. After installing the software, it connects to the casino service provider and handles contact without browser support. An advantage of these compared to web-based online casinos is speed, since it does not need to load graphics from the Internet because all multimedia is inside the downloaded software. On the downside, there is an initial download and the need for the installation of the program, and the risk of the program containing malware (though this is very uncommon).

Games offered

A typical selection of games on offer at an online casino might include: blackjack, roulette, baccarat, craps, [pai gow poker](#), [video poker](#), and slot machines.

See also [casino game](#).

Bonuses

Many online casinos offer large bonuses, often a "100% match bonus". For example, common terms and conditions for a bonus might be:

- 100% up to \$100
- Must wager 25 times the deposit and bonus before withdrawing
- Wagers on baccarat, craps, roulette, and sic bo do not count towards meeting wagering requirements

For this particular example, this would mean that a player depositing \$100 would start with \$200 in his account. He must make \$5000 ($\200×25) in wagers before withdrawing. This can be played at a game such as blackjack.

Some simple arithmetic shows that if the player leaves after meeting the requirements, he has a very large edge. For example, the house edge in blackjack is around or less than 0.5% at most online casinos. $\$5000 \times 0.005 = \25 . Therefore, the player expects to show a \$25 loss — however, he was given a \$100 bonus. Therefore, the player's expected profit is \$75, a massive 75% advantage. Usually, taking advantage of such a promotion is the only way to gain an edge over the casino.

This has often led to players playing at casinos to take the bonus, and leaving after the wagering requirements are met. These players are called by (and have adopted with pride) a variety of labels such as "advantage players", "bonus hunters", "bonus abusers", and, perhaps the most vulgar, "bonus whores". Strictly speaking, this behavior is usually prohibited by the casino,

because their terms usually dictate that players may play for recreational purposes only. In practice, players are rarely caught doing this, and usually when they are they simply have their promotion privileges revoked.

A player who wishes to do this at a large number of online casinos must be careful. Some casinos are rogues (see below) and do not pay. Others have terms and conditions that are not favorable to the player, such as most bonuses that are restricted to slots.

Rogues

Occasionally a **rogue casino** will be discovered. There are two ways a casino might misbehave: refusing to pay customers or cheating software.

Cheating software appears to be extremely rare. There are some casinos that have been mathematically proven to cheat, such as Casino Bar (evidence by Michael Shackleford and others). Some players often accuse certain popular software brands of casinos of cheating, for example Boss Media, Cryptologic, and Playtech, but they are likely "finding" patterns that are not actually there, as tests for cheating at these casinos has never turned up positive. This does not mean that all software providers are honest (for example, Elka System/Oyster Gaming software is known to cheat, also confirmed by Michael Shackleford), but the most popular software is more likely than not.

Blacklists

These are rogue casinos to avoid. Different authors have different opinions on which casinos are worth avoiding, so always read the reason that they are on the blacklist and decide for yourself if you want to play there.

- [The Wizard of Odds' blacklist](#)
- [Casinomeister's list of rogue casinos](#)
- [Casino Man's Blacklist](#)
- [Online Casino Conditions' Blacklist](#)
- [Top Gambler's Casino Blacklist](#)

Player fraud

Although there is the occasional rogue casino, sometimes it's the players who are deceitful or irresponsible. One of the most common cases is a player who signs up for multiple accounts at a casino using fake names to reap the bonus more than once. Another player might use Adobe Photoshop or a similar tool to manipulate the graphics of a slot machine screenshot to try to fool the casino into believing she hit a jackpot and didn't get paid for it. These are invariably gross violations of the terms of service of the casino and usually are frowned upon, even by many "bonus hunters". Casinos do not tolerate such behavior and will usually lock the account or accounts of the player responsible, and may inform other casinos and/or the software provider to keep the player out of other casinos.

See also

- Casinos
- Gambling
- Poker
- Online poker

Tournaments

A **poker tournament** is a [tournament](#) at which the winners are decided by playing [poker](#), usually a particular style of poker.

Contrast this to a [ring game](#), where the game is ongoing with no formal structure to determine a single winner in a certain length of time.

Entry fees and prizes

In a typical tournament, a player pays a fixed entry fee (called a *buy-in*) and receives, in return, a certain quantity of in-game currency, called *play money*, invariably represented in the form of [poker chips](#). Typically, the amount of play money given each player is an integer multiple of the buy-in. Only this in-game "play" money can be used in the game, real money cannot. Additionally, real and play money cannot be interchanged at any time. Some tournaments, however, offer the option of a *re-buy*; this gives players the option of purchasing more chips. In some cases, re-buys are conditional (for example, offered only to players low on chips) but in others they are unconditional, or offered to all players. When a player has no chips remaining (and has exhausted all re-buy options, if any are available) he or she is eliminated from the tournament.

In most tournaments, the number of players at each table is kept even by moving players, either by switching one player or (as the field shrinks) taking an entire table out of play and distributing its players amongst the remaining tables. A few tournaments, called *shoot-outs*, do not do this; instead, the last player (sometimes the last two or more players) at a table moves on to a second or third round, akin to a single-elimination tournament found in other games.

The prizes for winning are usually derived from the entry fees, though outside funds may be entered as well. For example, some invitational tournaments do not have entry fees. (These tournaments are referred to as [freeroll](#).) Play continues, in most tournaments, until all but one player is eliminated, though in some tournament situations, especially informal ones, players have the option of ending by consensus.

Players are ranked in reverse chronological order — the last person in the game earns 1st place, the second-to-last earns 2nd, and so on. This ranking of players by elimination is unique amongst games, and also precludes the possibility of a tie for first place, since one player alone must have all the chips to end the tournament. (Ties are possible for all other places, though they are rare since the sole tiebreaker is the number of chips one has at the start of the hand in which one is eliminated.)

Sometimes tournaments end by mutual consensus of the remaining players. For example, in a ten-person, \$5 game, there may be two players remaining with \$29 and \$21, respectively, worth of chips. Rather than risk losing their winning, as one of them would if the game were continued, these two players may be allowed to split the prize proportional to their in-game currency (or however they agree).

Prizes are awarded to the winning players in one of three ways:

- *Fixed*: Each placing corresponds to a certain payoff. For example, a ten-person, \$20 buy-in tournament might award \$100 to the first-place player, \$60 for second-place, \$40 for third, and nothing for lower places.
- *Proportional*: Payouts are determined according to a percentage-based scale. The percentages are determined based upon the number of participants and will increase payout positions as participation increases. As a rule, roughly one player in ten will 'cash', or make a high enough place to earn money. These scales are very top-heavy, with the top three players usually winning more than the rest of the paid players combined.

Tournaments can be open or invitational. The [World Series of Poker](#), whose final event ([no limit Texas Hold 'Em](#)) is considered the most prestigious of all poker tournaments, is open.

Satellite tournaments to high-profile, expensive poker tournaments are the means of entering a major event without posting a significant sum of cash. These have significantly smaller buy-ins, usually on the order of one-tenth to one-fiftieth the main tournament's buy-in. Top players in this event, in lieu of a cash prize, are awarded seats to the main tourney, with the number of places dependent on participation. Chris Moneymaker, who won the 2003 [World Series of Poker](#), was able to afford his seat at this event by winning an Internet tournament with a \$40 buy-in. Greg Raymer, 2004 World Series of Poker champion, acquired his seat via a \$165 Internet tournament.

Betting format

Betting, in tournaments, can take one of three forms:

- In a *structured* ([fixed limit](#)) betting system, bets and raises are restricted to specific amounts, though these amounts typically increase throughout the tournament. For example, for a [seven-card stud](#) tournament with the stakes at 10/20, raises would be \$10 in the first three rounds of betting, and \$20 in the latter rounds.
- *Semi-structured* betting provides ranges for allowed raises. Usually, in this format, one may not raise less than a previous player has raised. For example, if one player raises \$20, it would be illegal for another player to raise an additional \$5. [Pot limit](#) is a semi-structured format in which raises cannot exceed the current size of the pot.
- *Unstructured* betting, usually called [no limit](#). While blinds, antes, or bring-ins are fixed, players are free to bet as much as they wish, even early in a round of betting. To bet all of one's chips (risking one's tournament life, in the event of losing the hand) is to go *all-in*. In no-limit tournaments, players will sometimes take this risk even early in the betting; for example, in some no-limit Texas Hold 'Em tournaments, it is not uncommon for players to bet "all-in" before the flop.

The betting structure is one of the most defining elements of the game; even if other aspects are equivalent, a fixed-limit version and its no-limit counterpart are considered to be very *different* games, because the strategies and play styles are very different. For instance, it is much easier to bluff in a no-limit game, which allows aggressive betting, than in a fixed-limit game.

No-limit games also vary widely according to the proclivities of the players; an informal, emergent, betting structure is developed by the players' personal strategies and personalities.

The stakes of each round, as well as [blinds](#), bring-ins, and antes as appropriate per game, typically escalate according either to the time elapsed or the number of hands played. (Raising stake levels according to hands played is usually considered preferable, because it defeats strategic stalling.) This is done for two reasons. First of all, as players are eliminated from the tournament, the average chip counts of the players increase. Secondly, it prevents the game from getting into a rut where chips are exchanged among the players, but players do not run out.

Types of poker

While some tournaments offer a mix of games, like H.O.R.S.E. events which combine Hold'em, Omaha, Razz, Stud and Stud Eight or Better and Dealer's Choice events, at which one may choose from a similar menu of games, most tournaments feature one form of [stud](#) or [community card poker](#), such as [seven-card stud](#), seven card [high-low](#) stud, [Omaha Hold 'em](#) or [Texas Hold 'em](#). Both Omaha and Texas Hold'em tournaments are commonly offered in fixed-limit, [pot limit](#), and [no limit](#) forms.

Tournament venues

Informal tournaments can be organized by a group of friends; for example, most colleges feature poker tournaments. [Casinos](#) and online gaming sites often offer daily tournaments.

However, these are not the only venues. Several [World Poker Tour](#) venues are cruise ships at sea. The 2005 World Series of Poker primarily took place in the conference hall of the Rio Hotel in Las Vegas.

Major tournaments

The two largest and most well-known [tournaments](#) are the [World Poker Tour](#) championship event and the [World Series of Poker](#), held at Binion's Horseshoe [casino](#) in Las Vegas. The World Series has traditionally been featured on ESPN.

The 2005 World Series of Poker was the first held outside of Binion's Horseshoe Casino, though the final few days of the main event were held in the legendary Benny's Bullpen. Future tournaments will be held at one of the Harrah's Entertainment properties; 2005 saw the Rio as primary venue.

Arguably the most publicised European tournament is the [Poker Million](#), which began in 2000 on Sky Sports, following on from the success of the Late Night Poker television show.

[Multi-table tournament](#) | [Poker freerolls](#) | [Major poker tournaments](#) | [Chip monkeying](#) | [Chip race](#) | [World Series of Poker](#) | [World Poker Tour](#) | [European Poker Tour](#) | [Monte Carlo Millions](#) | [Poker Million](#) | [Ultimate Poker Challenge](#) | [World Championship of Online Poker](#) | [World Heads-Up Poker Championship](#)

Multi-table tournament

In [poker](#), a **Multi-table tournament (MTT)** is a tournament that involves multiple tables. A table generally sits 9 or 10 players, and MTT tournaments can incorporate up to 200 or more tables, for a total of 2000 entrants. MTTs are attractive because the payouts are rather large near the top. For a small investment (and a lot of time) one can win a large monetary prize if they finish In the Money.

Poker freerolls

Poker freerolls are poker tournaments that do not require a money buy-in. Commonly called "freerolls" and "freerollz", they were invented in the early 1960's when Las Vegas Casinos used them to reward VIPs by offering them a free poker tournament with real money prizes. Poker freerolls have surged in popularity recently with several [online poker](#) rooms regularly offering them to attract new players to the site, or to reward existing players' loyalty. Some online poker freerolls have a raked hands requirement to enter, meaning they are not entirely free. While most poker freerolls have real money prizes, some freerolls will offer other prizes such as trips, clothing, and gift certificates instead.

As the number of freerolls offered by various online casinos grows, the potential to profit solely by playing freerolls has become a reality. Some websites provide players with freeroll schedules, and some players are turning a significant profit just by hopping from site to site to play freerolls.

Major poker tournaments

There are a large number of [poker tournaments](#) held around the world each year. This page summarizes a few of the more popular ones that are run on a regular basis in a specific location. This does not include On-Line Poker Tournaments.

North America

- [World Series of Poker](#)
- [World Poker Tour](#)
- Professional Poker Tour
- [Poker Superstars Invitational Tournament](#)

Europe

- [European Poker Tour \(2004-\)](#)
- Late Night Poker (1999-2002 only)
- [Poker Million \(2000, 2003-\)](#)
- [World Heads-Up Poker Championship](#)

- World Speed Poker Open
- Grand Prix de Paris (now part of the World Poker Tour)
- British Open

Chip monkeying

Chip monkeying is the act of exchanging lower value [poker chips](#) in for higher value chips in a [poker](#) tournament. This is also sometimes referred to as "coloring up".

In most poker tournaments, players begin with a finite amount of chips. As the rounds progress and the blinds and limits increase, players are eliminated by losing all of their chips. The players that remain build increasingly larger stacks of chips. In order to keep the stacks of chips manageable, smaller value chips are removed from the table and replaced with larger value chips. Depending on the game and the rules of the tournament, uneven chips are either rounded up, rounded down, or raced off.

Chip race

A **chip race** is an event that takes place in [poker tournaments](#), especially those with an escalating blinds (such as [Texas hold 'em](#)), in which [chips](#) of denominations that are no longer needed (as the current and upcoming blinds are more easily played with larger chip values) are removed from play. This has the effect of reducing the number of physical chips in front of any player, and makes it easier for the players to count their stacks and their bets.

In a typical chip race:

1. All players *color up* their lesser-valued chips into greater denominations. For example, if the blinds have increased to a level where \$5 chips are no longer needed to post blinds, each five \$5 chips will be exchanged for a \$25 chip. Players will temporarily keep any leftover chips that cannot be fully colored up to larger chips (less than 5 \$5 chips in the above example).
2. All leftover chips are counted, and equivalent chips in the larger denomination are presented to the table. Continuing the example, if there are 15 \$5 chips remaining among 6 players, 3 \$25 chips are prepared. In the event the remaining smaller chips do not add up to a whole larger chip, an extra larger chip should be added as long as the leftover smaller chips total more than half a single larger chip.
3. Each player with leftover chips in the smaller denomination will receive one card for each chip. The cards are typically dealt face up, starting from the small blind position for the upcoming hand. Each player due to receive cards will receive all of his cards before the next player, rather than a "traditional" card deal; the player on the little blind, for example, who is due to receive three cards

for his three chips, will receive all three of his cards before the big blind receives any.

4. The larger chips are issued to the players with the highest single cards showing (poker hands do not count). No player is issued more than one chip. Ties (cards of the same rank) are broken by suit, using the same bridge (ascending alphabetical) order of the suits: Spades are highest, followed by Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs. All remaining lesser-value chips are removed from play.

A chip race cannot eliminate a player from the game. In the event a player's last smaller-denomination chips are removed from play as part of the chip race, he automatically gets one colored up chip if one is available. Any leftover colored up chips go to the winner(s) of the chip race as described above.

World Series of Poker

The **World Series of Poker** is the most prestigious set of [poker tournaments](#) in the world.

Origins

The original World Series of Poker was started by Tom Morehead of the Riverside casino in Reno and was an invitational event. The set of tournaments the World Series of Poker (WSOP) would evolve to was the brainchild of Las Vegas legend, casino owner, and poker player Benny Binion as well as his two sons Jack and Ted.

The Binion family not only nurtured the WSOP, but poker in general. Prior to the 1970s, poker was not found at many casinos because of the difficulty of keeping cheaters out. Through better security techniques as well as the Binion's tireless promotion through events like the WSOP, poker became a very popular game.

In 1970 the first WSOP at Binion's Horseshoe took place with seven players. The winner, Johnny Moss was elected by his peers as the first *World Champion of Poker* and received a silver cup as a prize.

Evolution

From 1971 on, all WSOP events have been tournaments with cash prizes. In 1973 a new event, five-card stud, was added to the main event of No Limit [Texas Hold 'em](#). Since then new events have been added and removed. In 2006 there will be 42 events at the WSOP, including poker games like [Omaha](#) and [Razz](#) as well as events only for seniors and women. Event winners get, in addition to their prize money, the coveted golden bracelet.

Doyle Brunson (nicknamed "Texas Dolly") and Johnny Chan have each won ten bracelets, while Phil Hellmuth has nine. Doyle's son, Todd Brunson, won a bracelet in a pot-limit Omaha event in 2005, making them the first father/son combo to win at least one event at the WSOP. Also, actress Jennifer Tilly became the second non-poker celebrity to win a WSOP event when

she won the Women's No-Limit Texas Hold-'Em event in 2005. French singer/actor Patrick Bruel won a Limit Hold'em championship in 1998.

The number of participants in the WSOP has grown every year, and in recent years the growth has exploded. In 2000 there were 4,780 entrants in the various events, but in 2005, the number rose to over 23,000 players. In the main event alone, participants grew from 839 in 2003, to 2,576 in 2004, to 5,619 in 2005. For the 2006 main event, a cap of 8,000 players has been established. Much of this growth can be attributed to the WSOP airing on ESPN and the [World Poker Tour](#) being shown on the Travel Channel, along with other USA television over-the-air and cable networks such as Fox Sports Net and their "Poker Superstars" series, Bravo with the ["Celebrity Poker Showdown"](#) series and GSN with their "Poker Royale" series, as well as the boom in [online poker](#) cardrooms on the World Wide Web.

Like most tournaments, the sponsoring casino takes a "rake" (a percentage of between six and ten percent, depending on the buy-in amount) from the buy-ins and distributes the rest, hence the prize money increases with more players. In the 2005 main event \$52,818,610 (US) in prize money was distributed, including a \$7.5 million first prize. Subtracting the \$10,000 buy-ins, over \$47 million was won by 560 players in the event. Carl Ygorn finished "on the bubble" (in 561st place), and Harrah's gave him a free entry into the 2006 Main Event.

Harrah's Takes The Pot

In 2004, Harrah's Entertainment purchased Binion's Horseshoe, renaming it just "Binion's" and announced that the 2005 Series events would be held at the Harrah's-owned Rio Hotel and Casino, located just off the Las Vegas Strip, with the final two days of the main event held downtown at Binion's in celebration of the centennial of the founding of Las Vegas. It also added a made-for-television \$2 million "freeroll" invitational "Tournament of Champions" (TOC) event won by Annie Duke as a "winner-take-all" event.

Starting in 2005, the WSOP began a tournament "circuit" at Harrah's-owned properties in the United States where in addition to the \$10,000 buy-in tournament at each site, qualifying players became eligible for a revamped Tournament of Champions. The 2005 TOC, made up of the top twenty qualifying players at each circuit event, along with the final table from the 2005 Main Event and the winners of nine or more bracelets (Hellmuth, Chan and Doyle Brunson) would participate in the revamped TOC at Caesar's Palace. Mike "The Mouth" Matusow won the first prize of \$1 million (US), and all the players at the final table were guaranteed a minimum of \$25,000 for the eighth and ninth place finishers. During a break in the final table of the 2005 Main Event on July 16, Harrah's announced that eleven properties — including the recently added Bally's and Caesar's properties — would host 2005-06 WSOP Circuit events that started on August 11 in Tunica, Mississippi. (One event, that was scheduled for Biloxi, Mississippi was cancelled after the Grand Casino Biloxi, which was scheduled to host the event, suffered major damage from Hurricane Katrina. A second event, scheduled to be held at Harrah's New Orleans, Louisiana property, is in limbo due to damage that it also suffered in said hurricane.)

The Rio will again host all 2006 WSOP major events, begining on June 25 with satellite events and formally start the next day with the annual Casino Employee tournament, and will feature the TOC on June 28 and 29, 2006, along with the various events leading up to the main event, which will be held from July 28 until August 10. If the limit of 8,000 players paying \$10K

(US) (with the exception of Carl Ygorn who gets the free pass as it were) is reached, the first prize is estimated to be \$10 million as well as a special bracelet different than the others.

The Marketing of the WSOP

Like any event or sports league, the WSOP also has corporate sponsors and licensed products, which like any leagues or events, pay fees to market themselves as an official sponsor and/or licensee and exclusively use the WSOP insignia and cross-promote with their events. Besides the Harrah's properties and ESPN, major sponsors have included Miller Brewing's "Milwaukee's Best" brand of beers, Pepsi's SoBe Adreneline Rush energy drink (sponsors of the 2005 TOC), Helene Curtis' Degree brand of anti-perspirant/deodorant, Card Player magazine, and GlaxoSmithKline/Bayer's Levitra erectile dysfunction medicine are all official corporate sponsors. Licensees include Activision (video games for different platforms such as Nintendo's GameCube, Microsoft's Xbox, Sony's PlayStation 2 and PC featuring computer generated versions of stars like Ferguson among others), and products made by different companies ranging from chip sets, playing cards, hand held games and clothing like caps and shirts. The fees and licences bring in over a million dollars to Harrah's.

The main event

The main event of the WSOP is the \$10,000 buy-in no-limit Texas Hold 'Em tournament. Winners of the event not only get the largest prize of the tournament and golden bracelet, but additionally their picture is placed into the *Gallery of Champions* at Binion's.

There have been many memorable events during the WSOP, including Jack Straus's 1982 comeback win after discovering he had one \$500 chip left when he thought he was out of the tournament.

A few players have won the WSOP multiple times, including Stu Ungar who won in 1980, 1981 and 1997. Ungar had a drug problem that spanned decades, which makes his 1997 win all the more amazing. Since Ungar had no money to enter the tournament in 1997, his friend and six-time WSOP bracelet winner Billy Baxter gave him the entrance fee. Ungar split the \$1,000,000 prize evenly with Baxter.

Johnny Chan won back to back in 1987 and 1988. Chan finished 2nd in 1989 to the youngest WSOP main event winner of all time, Phil Hellmuth. The final hand of the 1988 event between Chan and Erik Seidel would later be featured in the movie *Rounders*.

Chris Moneymaker won the main event in 2003 after qualifying through a \$39 satellite tournament at the PokerStars online cardroom. Four players at the final table of the 2004 main event qualified through PokerStars as well, including the winner, Greg Raymer and second place finisher David Williams. In 2005, eventual champion Joseph Hachem entered the old fashioned way: with the \$10,000 buy-in. After winning, he signed a contract to act as a representative of PokerStars also.

It may be that winning the WSOP makes legends out of people, but some living poker legends have tried unsuccessfully for years to win the main event, including: T. J. Cloutier (2000 and 1985 runner-up), Erik Seidel (1988 runner-up), Dave "Devilfish" Ulliott, Barry Greenstein, Men "The Master" Nguyen, and Howard Lederer.

World Poker Tour

The **World Poker Tour (WPT)** is a collection of [poker tournaments](#) featuring most of the world's professional players. It was started by attorney/television producer Stephen Lipscomb who now serves as CEO of WPT Enterprises (WPTE), the firm that controls the World Poker Tour.

The tour had its debut season in the latter part of 2002 and early part of 2003, climaxing with the WPT Championship in April 2003 at the Bellagio Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The first season aired on the Travel Channel on American cable television in the spring of 2003. The show made its network debut on February 1, 2004 on NBC with a special "Battle Of Champions" tournament, which aired against CBS coverage of the Super Bowl XXXVIII pre-game show.

The World Poker Tour is a collection of [Texas hold 'em poker tournaments](#) held internationally and on board cruise ships, but mainly in the United States. The television show has led to a boom in the table game across American homes, [local casinos](#) and poker rooms, and online. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the key sponsors of the tour are casinos and online poker sites. The show, which is syndicated internationally, is co-hosted by World Series of Poker winner Mike Sexton, and actor Vince Van Patten. Former model Shana Hiatt served as the show host and sideline reporter in its first three seasons. Former newscaster Courtney Friel took over the host role for the fourth season in 2005-06.

First exemplified by the long-running [World Series of Poker](#) main event, a poker tournament gives each player an equal amount of [chips](#) to start, with colors representing different values. Play continues, typically over several days until one player has acquired all of the chips. When that occurs, that player has won the game and captures the grand prize, approximately 30-35% of the total prize pool. The resulting winner's check can exceed one million dollars. All other competitors finish with no chips, but win a portion of the prize pool according to the order in which they left the tournament. The last player to lose all of his chip-stack finishes in 2nd position, typically worth approximately 20% of the prize pool.

The drawing power of the WPT, like any poker tournament, is that anyone who can pay the "buy-in" (an entry fee usually worth a few thousand dollars) or win a "satellite" tournament is able to compete against the top professional players, such as Phil Hellmuth, Doyle Brunson, or the top 2004 tournament money and multi-WPT tournament winner, Daniel Negreanu.

Fans of the show find it interesting due to technical innovations such as the ability to see the players' hole cards through a small camera in front of them on the [poker](#) table (an innovation first seen on the UK programme Late Night Poker). Due to the success of the show, special programs, such as the "Hollywood Home Game", featuring celebrities playing for charity, and "Ladies Night", where six of the top women played against each other, were developed.

In 2004 the World Poker Tour created a Walk of Fame, inducting poker legends Doyle Brunson and Gus Hansen as well as actor James Garner.

Now in its fourth season of broadcast, it still remains among the highest rated television programs on cable. It airs Wednesdays on the Travel Channel. The first three seasons of WPT are also available on NTSC DVD. (The second season DVD set features audio commentary by several of the players. The third season is only available in a "Best Of" format, featuring just half of the episodes.)

A series of spin-off tournaments, titled the Professional Poker Tour, began filming in 2004. No episodes have as yet been broadcast, partly due to a dispute with the Travel Channel over rights. In the fall of 2005, WPTE announced that "a cable channel" (believed to be ESPN) had withdrawn from bidding for the PPT series, and that WPTE was negotiating with the Travel Channel to air the series.

Player of the Year

Points are awarded for all Open events as follows:

- Winner: 1000 points
- Runner-up: 700 points
- 3rd place: 600 points
- 4th place: 500 points
- 5th place: 400 points
- 6th place: 300 points
- 7th place (TV bubble): 200 points

This award is given out to one player per season.

[WPT Walk of Fames](#)

WPT Walk of Fames

The [World Poker Tour Walk of Fame](#) is designed to honor those [poker](#) players who have played the game well at the highest levels as well as those who have promoted the spread of it through film, television, and literature. It was started in 2004.

The Walk of Fame is located in front of the Commerce Casino in Los Angeles, California. As well as inductee handprints on each tile, there is a depiction of each of their respective most famous poker hands.

See also

- [Poker Hall of Fame](#)
- [European Poker Players Hall of Fame](#)

European Poker Tour

The [European Poker Tour \(EPT\)](#) began in 2004 as part of the worldwide explosion in [Texas Hold 'em](#) popularity. It shows a series of [poker](#) tournaments similar to those in the [World Poker Tour \(WPT\)](#).

The most significant difference between the competing poker tours is the buyin and its effect on the prize pool, with the EPT featuring buyins about half the size of the WPT. The resulting

effect upon the EPT is that it has less "star power" and lower cash prizes. Nevertheless, winners of the first two EPT events took home prizes in the \$100,000 range, lucrative enough to attract many top competitors.

Furthermore, the final table is made up of 8 players, as opposed to the 6 player final tables popularised by the WPT.

The EPT is sponsored by [PokerStars.com](#) and taped for television broadcast in the United Kingdom by Sunset & Vine and Channel 4.

The tour was created by John Duthie, winner of the inaugural Poker Million tournament.

Monte Carlo Millions

The **Monte Carlo Millions** was the first ever [poker tournament](#) to be staged in the city-state of Monaco. The inaugural event was completed on November 12th, 2004. Apparently birthed out of the preceding explosion of [Texas Hold 'em](#) popularity, it was conceived of and sponsored by Prima Poker. The field was limited to 80 players and the buy-in was \$14,000 USD. A vast majority of the competitors were world famous professionals, with the remainder of the field comprised of online satellite winners and lesser known professionals. In November 2005, the second MCM tourney will feature a 120 player field and a \$25,000 buyin. It features the largest prize pool in European History: \$3 million, with \$1 million going to the winner. The final table will be played out at the legendary Monte-Carlo Casino.

The 2004 event was dominated nearly start to finish by the world's top tournament player, Phil Ivey. With three players remaining, however, he was outdrawn by an unheralded Finn Jani Sointula, who would go on to take the title and \$400,000 USD first prize after knocking out Ivey.

The Monte Carlo Millions is broadcast in the UK on pokerzone.

Poker Million

The **Poker Million** is a major European [poker tournament](#) which started in 2000 on the Isle of Man. It is now held annually in England and televised live on Sky Sports.

Ultimate Poker Challenge

The **Ultimate Poker Challenge (UPC)** is a series of weekly [poker tournaments](#) acting as super-satellites into the series semi-finals.

The first season is available on NTSC DVD.

Format

Players are entitled to enter multiple super-satellite tournaments (entry into the semi-finals is transferrable.)

Players can also qualify for the semi-finals based on the points leaderboard for their finishing position in each event. In the first season, "Silent" Steve Simmons placed highest on the points leaderboard and received \$40,000. The second place finisher received \$20,000.

Crew

The majority of episodes are hosted by Chad Brown and Brandi Williams. Daniel "Kid Poker" Negreanu provided cover for Chad Brown in episodes 19 and 20.

Numerous guest commentators also appeared throughout the series.

Executive producer Dan "The Brooklyn Express" Pugliese also played in numerous tournaments throughout the series.

World Championship of Online Poker

The **World Championship of Online Poker** (WCOOP) is an [online poker tournament](#) sponsored by PokerStars.com.

Established in 2002 as the online equivalent of the [World Series of Poker](#), the WCOOP tournament series is the largest of its kind on the Internet.

The fifteen WCOOP events in 2005 generated \$12,783,900 in prize money, making it not only the biggest ever online poker event, but the third biggest poker series (live or online) in all of 2005.

World Heads-Up Poker Championship

The **World Heads-Up Poker Championship** (WHUPC) is an annual elimination-format [poker tournament](#) of one-on-one no limit [texas hold'em](#) matches. The tournament was co-created by Late Night Poker's Nic Szeremeta.

The event has run since 2001 and is held in Europe, although entry is open to all.

Poker jargon

The large and growing **jargon of poker** includes many terms. This page contains brief definitions of the most common terms you may encounter in text or at play. If possible, a link to a more complete article on the topic is given. Though space is not an issue here, the list has been trimmed to primarily those poker-specific terms one might find in poker texts or in common use in casinos.

Various [poker hands](#) have been given many names, and these are listed in [List of slang names for poker hands](#). Finally, this is not meant to be a formal dictionary; precise usage details and multiple closely related senses are omitted here in favor of concise treatment of the basics.

Contents: Top - 0-9 [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

0–9

A

A-B-C, A-B-C-D

1. A sequence of the lowest cards in a [lowball](#) game. For example, the hand 8-6-3-2-A might be called an "eight-six-a-b-c".
2. Uncreative or predictable play. *He's an a-b-c player.*

ace-to-five, ace-to-six

Methods of evaluating low hands. See [ace-to-five low](#), [ace-to-six low](#).

aces and spaces

A hand with one pair of aces, and nothing else. Used derogatorily, especially in games such as [seven-card stud](#), where two pair is a typical winning hand.

action

1. A player's turn to act. *The action is on you.*
2. A willingness to gamble. *I'll give you action* or *There's plenty of action in this game*
3. A bet, along with all the calls of that bet. For example, if one player makes a \$5 bet and three other players call, he is said to have \$5 "in action", and to have received \$15 worth of action on his bet. Usually this term comes into play when figuring side pots when one or more players is all in. See [table stakes](#).

action button

A marker similar to a kill button, on which a player places an extra forced bet. Typically in a [stud](#) game, a player is required to post an amount representing a completion of the [bring-in](#) to a full bet. For example, in a stud game with \$2 and \$4 betting limits and a \$1 bring-in, a player with the action button must post \$2; after the cards are dealt, the player with the low card must still pay the \$1 bring-in, then when the betting reaches the player who posted the \$2, he is required to leave it in as a raise of the bring-in (and has the option to raise further). Players in between the bring-in and the action button can just call the bring-in, but they know ahead of time that they will be raised by the action button.

action player

Euphemism for a less skillful player who bets and calls frequently with inferior hands.
Also called an "Action Junkie" (derogatory).

add-on

In a live game, to buy more chips before you have busted. In [tournament](#) play, a single rebuy for which all players are eligible regardless of their stack size. This is usually allowed only once, at the end of the rebuy period.

advertising

To make an obvious play or expose cards in such a way as to deliberately convey an impression to your opponents about your style of play. For example, to make a bad play or bluff to give the impression that you bluff frequently (hoping opponents will then call your legitimate bets) or to show only good hands to give the impression that you rarely bluff (hoping opponents will then fold when you do).

aggressive

A player who frequently bets and raises. Compare to "passive"; see also [aggression \(poker\)](#), "loose", "tight".

Ainsworth

A term used in hold'em; 6 – 2 as a player's first two cards.

air

In a [lowball](#) game, "giving air" is letting an opponent who might otherwise fold know that you intend to draw one or more cards to induce him to call.

all in

Having bet one's entire stake. See [table stakes](#).

all blue/all pink

A [flush](#), "blue" usually referring to black suits and "pink" to red ones. Occasionally one hears "all green" or "all purple".

Alligator blood

A tough player who plays well under pressure is said to have "alligator blood".

ammo, ammunition

Chips in play. *I'm going to need more ammo for this game.* Compare to "fire".

angle

A technically legal, but borderline unethical, play. For example, deliberately miscalling one's own hand to induce a fold, or placing odd amounts of chips in the pot to confuse opponents about whether you mean to call or raise. A player employing such tactics is called an "angle shooter".

Anna Kournikova

In Texas Hold 'Em, referring to a player who is dealt A-K for his or her pocket cards and never having the hand improve. This parodies Anna Kournikova in that the hand looked good, but didn't win.

ante

Once meaning a first-round bet, now a type of forced bet before cards are dealt. See [ante](#).

ante off

In **tournament** play, to force an absent player to continue paying antes, blinds, bring-ins, or other forced bets so that the contest remains fair to the other players. *Go ahead and take that phone call. We'll ante you off until you get back.* Also "blind off".

B

baby

A low-ranked card, usually used in **lowball** games. See also "spoke".

backdoor

1. A draw requiring two or more rounds to fill. For example, catching two consecutive cards in two rounds of **Seven-card stud** or **Texas hold 'em** to fill a **straight** or **flush**.
2. A hand made other than the hand the player intended to make. *I started with four hearts hoping for a flush, but I backdoored two more kings and my trips won.*

back in

1. To enter a pot by checking and then calling someone else's **open** on the first betting round. Usually used in games like **Jackpots**, meaning to enter without openers.
2. To enter a pot cheaply or for free because of having posted a **blind**.

back into

To win a pot with a hand that would have folded to any bet. For example, two players enter a pot of draw poker, both drawing to **flushes**. Both miss, and check after the draw. The player with the ace-high draw "backs into" winning the pot against the player with only a king-high draw. Also to make a backdoor draw, for example, a player who starts a hand with three of a kind, but makes a runner-runner flush, can be said to back into the flush.

bad beat

An event in which a player with a high expectation of winning the pot loses. This expectation may be based on having an unusually strong hand beaten by an even stronger one, or by having an opposing player make an extremely unlikely draw. "Bad beat stories" are frequent topics of conversation at poker tables. Lou Krieger started a tradition among some players of charging \$1 to listen to one. In some casinos there is a "bad beat jackpot" awarded to a player who suffers a particular beat, for example, having **four of a kind** beaten. See **bad beat**.

bank

Also called the house, the person responsible for distributing chips, keeping track of the buy-ins, and paying winners at the end of the game.

Bankroll

The amount of money that a player has to wager for the duration of his or her poker career.

behind

1. Not currently having the best hand. *I'm pretty sure my pair of jacks was behind Lou's kings, but I had other draws, so I kept playing.*

2. Describing money in play but not visible as chips in front a player. For example, a player may announce "I've got \$100 behind" while handing money to a casino employee, meaning that he intends those chips to be in play as soon as they are brought to him.

belly buster

An inside straight draw. Also called a "gutshot".

berry patch

A game with many unskilled or "live" players; a lucrative opportunity for profit.

bet

1. Any money wagered during the play of a hand.
2. More specifically, the [opening](#) bet of a betting round.
3. In a [fixed limit](#) game, the standard betting amount. *There were six bets in the pot when I called.*

betting structure

The set of specific rules for any game covering how much one may or must bet at any point in the game, including forced bets, limits, and raising cap. See [betting structure](#).

bicycle, bicycle wheel

The hand A-2-3-4-5. See [wheel](#).

big bet

In a [fixed limit](#) game where the limit is higher in later rounds than in early rounds, the higher amount is called a "big bet". *That \$10-\$20 game looked good, but I only had 8 big bets in my pocket at the time.*

big bet game

A game played with a [no limit](#) or pot limit betting structure.

big slick

A [Texas Hold'em](#) starting hand that consists of an Ace and King regardless of suit.

blank

A card, frequently a [community card](#), of no apparent value. *I suspected Margaret had a good draw, but the river card was a blank, so I bet again.* See "brick".

blaze

A hand of five face cards that used to outrank a [flush](#).

bleed

To lose small amounts continually, so as to add up to a large loss. *I won that large pot with my kings, but then I bled it all off over the next hour.*

blind

1. A type of forced bet. See [blind](#).
2. A term applied to any action taken by a player before seeing some piece of information to which that player would normally be entitled before that action. For example, a player who would be first to act after the draw in a draw poker game might discard cards and then announce "I bet \$10 blind" before looking at his replacement cards. One can similarly check blind, raise blind, etc. Also "dark" or "in the dark".

blind crowley

Folding your hand when the action to check is an option before looking at your cards.

See also "[crowley](#)", "[lord crowley](#)"

blind stud

A [stud poker](#) game in which all cards are dealt face down. Was popular in California before legal rulings made traditional stud legal there.

bluff

To bet an inferior hand hoping the opponent will fold. See [bluff](#).

bluff-catcher

On the last betting round, a hand that cannot win if the opponent is making a legitimate [value](#) bet, but that might win if the opponent's bet was a pure bluff. *It looked like Jim and I were both drawing for a flush. I missed and he bet, but I figured the pair of nines I caught along the way made a bluff-catcher, so I called.*

board

1. The set of [community cards](#) in a [community card game](#). *If another spade hits the board, I'll have to fold.*
2. The set of face-up cards of a particular player in a [stud](#) game. *Zack's board didn't look too scary, so I bet into him again.*
3. The set of all face-up cards in a stud game. *I started with a flush draw, but there were already four other diamonds showing on the board, so I folded.*

boat

A [full house](#). See also "full boat", "tight".

bobtail

An open-ender, or "outside" [straight](#) draw. Occasionally used to refer to an inside straight draw or a four-card [flush](#) draw as well.

bomb

A brick.

bone

A chip, often of small denomination.

book

Four of a kind.

both ways

Both halves of a split pot, often declared by a player who thinks he or she will win both low and high.

bottom end

The lowest of several possible [straights](#), especially in a [community card game](#). For example, in [Texas hold 'em](#) with the cards 5-6-7 on the board, a player holding 3-4 has the bottom end straight, while a player holding 4-8 or 8-9 has a higher straight. Also "idiot end".

bottom pair, bottom set

In a [community card game](#), a pair (or set) made by matching the lowest-ranking board card with one (or two) in one's private hand.

box

The chip tray in front of a house dealer, and by extension, the house dealer's position at the table. *You've been in the box for an hour now; don't you get a break?*

boxed card

A card encountered face-up in the assembled deck during the deal, as opposed to one overturned in the act of dealing. Most house rules treat a boxed card as if it didn't exist; that is, it is placed aside and not used. Different rules cover cards exposed during the deal.

break

1. In a [draw poker](#) game, to discard cards that make a [made hand](#) in the hope of making a much better one. For example, a player with J-J-10-9-8 may wish to break his pair of jacks to draw for the [straight](#), and a [lowball](#) player may break his 9-high 9-5-4-2-A to draw for the [wheel](#).
2. To end a session of play. *The game broke at about 3:00.*

brick

A blank, though more often used in the derogatory sense of a card that is undesirable rather than merely inconsequential, such as a card of high rank or one that makes a pair in a low-hand game.

brick and mortar

A poker game played in person with real physical cards at a traditional casino. The term is meant to distinguish brick and mortar games from online poker games. Abbreviated "B&M".

bring in

To [open](#) a betting round. *Gary brought it in for \$5, and Kevin raised \$10.*

bring-in

A kind of forced bet. See [bring-in](#).

broadway

An ace-high [straight](#). A "broadway card" is any card that might make such a straight, namely a 10, J, Q, K, or A.

brush

A casino employee whose job it is to greet players entering the poker room, maintain the list of persons waiting to play, announce open seats, and various other duties (including brushing off tables to prepare them for new games, whence the name).

buck

A token used to mark the position of the dealer. See [Buck](#).

bug

A [wild card](#) that can serve to fill a [straight](#) or [flush](#), but which otherwise plays as an ace.

See [bug](#).

bullet

1. An ace.
2. A chip. See "ammo".

bully

To bluff repeatedly at all opportunities, or a player who does so. See "run over".

bum deal

A mis-deal

bump

To [raise](#). *I raised \$5, and Joe bumped it to \$20.*

burn, burn card

To deal a card directly into the discards, often at the start of the second and subsequent rounds of a multiple-round game (for example, before giving players their draws in a [draw poker](#) game, or before the flop in a [community card game](#)). This is done for several reasons, including protecting the players against marked cards, making it easier to recover from irregularities in the deal, and others.

busted

1. Not complete, such as four cards to a straight that never gets the fifth card to complete it.
2. Out of chips.

button

1. A token (also called a buck) used to mark the position of the dealer. In casino games with a house dealer, a buck may still be used to mark the position of the player who acts last on that deal (which would normally be the dealer in a home game). See [Buck](#)
2. The player currently seated in the position marked by the button. *The button raised last round, so I checked into him.*

buy-in

The minimum required amount of chips to become involved in a game (or tournament). For example, a \$4-\$8 [fixed limit](#) game might require a player to buy at least \$40 worth of chips to play. This is typically far less than an average player would expect to play with for any amount of time, but large enough that the player can play a number of hands without buying more, so the game isn't slowed down by constant chip-buying.

buy short

To buy into a game for an amount smaller than the normal buy-in. Some casinos allow this under certain circumstances, such as after having lost a full buy-in, or if all players agree to allow it.

buy the button

A rule originating in northern California casinos in games played with [blinds](#), in which a new player sitting down with the button to his right (who would normally be required to sit out a hand as the button passed him, then post to come in) may choose to pay the amount of both blinds for this one hand (the amount of the large blind playing as a live blind, and the amount of the small blind as dead money), play this hand, and then receive the button on the next hand as if he had been playing all along.

C

call

To match the current bet amount, maintaining one's interest in the pot. See [call](#).

calling station

A weak player who frequently checks and calls, but rarely raises.

cap

A limit on the number of [raises](#) allowed in a betting round. Typically three or four (in addition the [opening](#) bet). In most casinos, the cap is removed if there are only two players remaining either (1) at the beginning of the betting round, or (2) at the time that what would have otherwise been the last raise is made.

Also, term for the chip, token, or object placed atop one's cards to show continued involvement with a hand.

[cards speak](#)

1. Describing a split-pot game, one without a [declaration](#).
2. A common house rule stating that properly shown hands at showdown may be read by anyone, and need not be announced. See [cards speak](#).

[case card](#)

The last available card of a certain description (typically a rank). *The only way I can win is to catch the case king.*, meaning the only king remaining in the deck.

[cash plays](#)

See "money plays".

[catch](#)

To receive needed cards on a draw. *I'm down 300--I can't catch anything today.* or *Joe caught his flush early, but I caught the boat on seventh street to beat him.* Often used with an adjective to further specify, for example "catch perfect", "catch inside", "catch smooth".

[catch up](#)

To successfully complete a [draw](#), thus defeating a player who previously had a better hand. *I was sure I had Karen beat, but she caught up when that spade fell.*

[catch perfect](#)

To catch the only two possible cards that will complete a hand and win the pot, usually those leading to a straight flush. Usually used in [Texas Hold 'Em](#). Compare with "runner-runner".

[cat-hop](#)

In [five-card draw](#), a longshot draw requiring two desired cards to make a hand, specifically drawing two cards to a [straight](#) or [flush](#), or drawing two cards to a small pair and kicker to make a full house.

[center pot](#)

The main pot in a [table stakes](#) game where one or more players are all in.

[chase](#)

1. To continue to play a [drawing](#) hand over multiple betting rounds, especially one unlikely to succeed. *Frank knew I made three nines on fourth street, but he chased that flush draw all the way to the river.*
2. To continue playing with a hand that is not likely the best because one has already invested money in the pot.

[check](#)

1. To bet nothing. See [check](#).
2. A casino chip.

[check out](#)

To fold, in turn, even though there is no bet facing the player. In some games this is considered a breach of etiquette equivalent to folding out of turn. In others it is permitted, but frowned upon.

check-raise

To check, and then raise someone else's [open](#). See [check-raise](#).

cheese

A poor hand. *Throw that piece of cheese in the muck and move on to the next hand.*

chip

A token representing money used for betting.

chip along

To bet or call the minimum required to stay in, often done with little or no reflection.

See also "white check".

chip declare

A method of declaring intent to play high or low in a split-pot game with declaration (see [declaration](#)).

chip dumping

A form of collusion that happens during tournaments, especially in the early rounds.

Two or more players decide to go all-in early. The winner gets a large amount of chips, which increases the player's chance of cashing. The winnings are then split among the colluders.

chip race

In [tournament](#) play, the act of removing all the small chips from play by dealing random cards to players holding odd chips, and awarding a proportional number of larger chips to the highest-ranking cards. See [chip race](#).

chip up

To exchange lower-denomination chips for higher-denomination chips. In [tournament](#) play, the term means to remove all the small chips from play by rounding up any odd small chips to the nearest large denomination, rather than using a chip race.

chop

1. To split a pot because of a tie, split-pot game, or player agreement.
2. To play a game for a short time and cash out; see "hit and run".
3. A request made by a player to a dealer after taking a large-denomination chip that he wishes the dealer to make change.
4. To chop blinds.

chop blinds

An agreement between neighboring players having posted [blinds](#) that if all other players fold to them, they will each retrieve their respective blind amounts and discard their hands rather than playing out the hand. This is done to avoid excessive charges by the casino for small pots. It is generally frowned upon by casinos, so it usually takes the form of the small blind folding, and then the player with the large blind refunding the small blind amount while the dealer isn't looking. Agreement must be made ahead of time.

closed

1. Describing a betting round, the condition that no player is eligible to raise, either because the last raise was called by all players, or because the cap was reached.
2. Describing a poker game, one in which each player's cards are concealed from all opponents. See [closed](#).

cockroach

Euphemism for a player who frequently raises the pot in a blatant attempt to steal the antes or blinds.

coffeehouse

To make annoying smalltalk during a game, to make comments about a hand in progress, or to make deceptive comments about one's own play.

cold

1. Consecutive, as in *I caught three cold spades for the flush.*
2. Unlucky, as in *I've been cold all week.*

cold call

To call an amount that represents a sum of bets or raises by more than one player. *Alice opened for \$10, Bob raised another \$20, and Charlie cold called the \$30.*

cold deck

A deck previously arranged to produce a specific outcome, then surreptitiously switched into the game. Called "cold" because such a deck switched in during play will not have been warmed by the dealer's hands. *I can't believe Jim got those four kings the same time I got four sixes--it was like being cold-decked.* Also "ice".

collusion

A form of cheating involving cooperation among two or more players.

color change, color up

To exchange small-denomination chips for larger ones.

combo, combination game

A casino table at which multiple forms of poker are played in rotation.

come bet, on the come

A bet or raise made with a [drawing](#) hand, building the pot in anticipation of filling the draw. Usually a weak "gambler's" play, but occasionally correct with a very good draw and large pot or as a semi-bluff.

community card

A card dealt face-up to the center of the table (not to any one player's hand), which can be used in some way by multiple players according to specific game rules. See [community card](#), [community card game](#).

completion

To raise a small bet up to the amount of what would be a normal-sized bet. For example, in a \$2/\$4 stud game with \$1 [bring-in](#), a player after the bring-in may raise it to \$2, completing what would otherwise be a sub-minimum bet up to the normal minimum. Also in limit games, if one player raises all in for less than the normally required minimum, a later player might complete the raise to the normal minimum (depending on house rules; see [table stakes](#)).

connectors

- Two or more cards of consecutive rank.
- countdown
- Especially in [lowball](#), two hands very nearly tied that must be compared in detail to determine a winner, for example, 8-6-5-3-2 versus 8-6-5-3-A.
 - The act of counting the cards that remain in the stub after all cards have been dealt, done by a dealer to ensure that a complete deck is being used.
- counterfeit
- Most often used in [community card games](#), a card appearing on the board that doesn't change the value of one's own hand, but that makes it much more likely for an opponent to tie or beat you, often because it duplicates what was previously a valuable card in your hand. Also "duplicate". See [counterfeit](#).
- cow
- A player with whom one is sharing a buy-in, with the intent to split the result after play.
To "go cow" is to make such an arrangement.
- cowboy
- A king. *And he's flopped a pair of cowboys*
- crack
- To beat a better hand, mostly heard in reference to the best Hold em hole cards, AA. eg
"My Aces were cracked again"
- crossfire
- See "[whipsaw](#)".
- crowley
- Folding your hand when the action to check is an option. "You could have checked, why did you pull a crowley." See also "[blind crowley](#)", "[lord crowley](#)"
- crying call
- A call made reluctantly on the last betting round with the expectation of losing (but with some remote hope of catching a bluff).
- cut
- Take some of the cards off the top of a deck and move them to the bottom.
- cutoff
- The seat immediately to the right of the dealer button. Also "pone".
- ## D
- dark
- Describing an action taken before receiving information to which the player would normally be entitled. *I'm drawing three, and I check in the dark.* See "blind".
- dead blind
- A [blind](#) that is not "live", in that the player posting it does not have the option to raise if other players just call. Rarely used.
- dead button
- A dealer button placed in a position where there is no player. This occurs in some casinos when the player who would otherwise be entitled to the button leaves the game

(other casinos move the button forward to the next player). This occurs frequently during poker tournaments, due to player elimination.

dead hand

A player's hand that is not entitled to participate in the deal for some reason, such as having been fouled by touching another player's cards, being found to contain the wrong number of cards, being dealt to a player who did not make the appropriate forced bets, etc.

dead man's hand

A dead man's hand is the famous hand Wild Bill Hickok was holding when he was shot and killed in 1877, consisting of a pair of aces and a pair of eights of the black suits (spades and clubs); but often refers to any two pairs of aces and eights.

dead money

1. Money placed into a pot that does not represent equal bets and calls by active players in the pot. This can be the earlier bets of players who have folded, or money placed in the pot before the deal.
2. By extension, it is used as a derogatory term for money put in play by unskilled players who are legally eligible, but unlikely, to win it back. Can also refer to the player: *Let's play that stud game--Joe and Diane are dead money.*

deadwood

The muck.

deal

1. To distribute cards to players in accordance with the rules of the game being played.
2. A single instance of a game of poker, begun by shuffling the cards and ending with the award of a pot. Also called a "hand" (though both terms are ambiguous).
3. An agreement to split [tournament](#) prize money differently from the announced payouts.
4. See "business".

dealer

The person dealing the cards, or the person who assumes that role for the purposes of betting order in a game, even though someone else might be physically dealing. In the latter case, that player is often marked with a button, and may be called "the button".

dealer's choice

A version of poker in which the deal passes each game and each dealer can choose, or invent, a new poker game each hand.

declare

To verbally indicate an action or intention; see [declaration](#).

decloak

To raise after having [sandbagged](#) for a time (making it clear that you were, in fact, sandbagging). See "in the bushes".

deep

Describing a large amount of money, either in play or having been lost. *How deep are you?* (meaning "How much money do you have", in anticipation of making a very large bet). *I won that large pot, but I'm in much deeper than that.*

defense

1. Playing to minimize investment or loss rather than maximize a win; for example, with a drawing hand that is risky but that you think *should* call an opponent's bet, you might make a smaller "defensive bet" yourself that you think your opponent will just call, rather than checking and calling a larger bet, or showing weakness.
2. Occasionally calling with weak hands to discourage opponents from bullying, especially when in the blinds.

See [Defense](#)

deuce

1. A 2-spot card.
2. Any of various related uses of the number two, such as a \$2 limit game, a \$2 chip, etc.

deuce-to-seven

A method of evaluating low hands.

discard

To take a previously dealt card out of play. The set of all discards for a deal is called the "muck" or the "deadwood".

dog

Underdog; that is, a player with a smaller chance to win than another specified player. Frequently used when the exact odds are expressed. *Harry might have been bluffing, but if he really had the king, my hand was a 4-to-1 dog, so I folded.*

dominated hand

A hand that is extremely unlikely to win against another specific hand, even though it may not be a poor hand in its own right. Most commonly used in [Texas hold 'em](#). A hand like A-Q, for example, is a good hand in general but is dominated by A-K, because whenever the former makes a good hand, the latter is likely to make a better one. A hand like 7-8 is a poor hand in general, but is not dominated by A-K because it makes different kinds of hands.

donation

A [call](#) made by a player who fully expects to lose; made either out of boredom or irrational optimism.

donk, donkey

Epithet for an inexperienced, unskilled, or foolish poker player. *I played that hand like a donkey.*

donk (verb)

To play a hand poorly. *I donked off 15 bucks on that last hand.*

door card

1. In a [stud](#) game, a player's first face-up card. *Patty paired her door card on fifth street and raised, so I put her on trips.*
2. Window card.

double-ace flush

Under unconventional rules, a flush with one or more [wild cards](#) in which they play as aces, even if an ace is already present.

double-board, double-flop

Any of several [community card game](#) variants (usually [Texas hold 'em](#)) in which two separate boards of community cards are dealt simultaneously, with the pot split between the winning hands using each board.

double-draw

Any of several [Draw poker](#) games in which the draw phase and subsequent betting round are repeated twice.

double gutter, double belly buster

In games involving six or more cards, a draw to a [straight](#) that can be filled by two ranks, but that is not an open-ender. For example, K-J-10-9-7, which can become a straight with any Q or 8.

double through, double up

In a big bet game, to bet all of one's chips on one hand against a single opponent (who has an equal or larger stack) and win, thereby doubling your stack. *I was losing a bit, but then I doubled through Sarah to put me in good shape.*

downcard

A card that is dealt facedown.

down to the felt

All in, or having lost all of one's money. Refers to the green felt surface of a poker table no longer obscured by chips.

drag light

To pull chips away from the pot to indicate that you don't have enough money to cover the bet. If you win, the amount is ignored. If you lose, you must cover the amount from your pocket.

draw

1. [Draw poker](#).
2. To replace one or more cards in one's hand with new ones from the deck stub, as in [draw poker](#).
3. The act of staying in a hand in hopes of improving, usually to a straight or flush--*on a draw*.
4. A drawing hand.

drawing hand

In any game, an incomplete hand which is not likely to win unless future cards, received by whatever means the game specifies, improve it. For example, having four club-suited cards but no pair in a stud game, hoping that one of the cards to come will be a fifth club, making a [flush](#). See [draw](#).

drawing dead

Playing a [drawing](#) hand that will lose even if successful (a state of affairs usually only discovered after the fact). *I caught the jack to make my straight, but Rob had a full house all along, so I was drawing dead.*

drawing live

Not drawing dead; that is, **drawing** to a hand that will win if successful.
drawing thin
Not drawing completely dead, but chasing a draw in the face of poor odds. Example: a player who will only win by catching 1 or 2 specific cards is said to be drawing thin.
drink pot
A pot won by a player with the agreement that drinks will be bought from the proceeds.
See "pot".
drop

1. To fold.
2. Money charged by the casino for providing its services, often dropped through a slot in the table into a strong box. See "rake".
3. To drop ones cards to the felt to indicate that one is in or out of a game like guts.

dry pot
A side pot with no money. Created when a player goes all in and is called by more than one opponent, but not raised. Bluffing into a dry pot is a play that cannot possibly earn a profit, so doing so is considered foolish. It may also be unethical, because it serves to protect the all-in player at the expense of the bettor and the other players, and so is a form of collusion.

dump, dumped
To lose a large quantity of ones stack to another player on a particular hand or set of hands in short succession. *I dumped half my stack to John after he cracked my Kings.*

duplicate
To **counterfeit**, especially when the counterfeiting card matches one already present in the one's hand.

E

early position
In a betting round with multiple players involved, those who bet first are said to be in early position. See **position**.

equity
One's mathematically expected income from the current deal, calculated by multiplying the amount of money in the pot by one's probability of winning. For example, if the pot currently contains \$100, and you estimate that you have a one in four chance of winning it, then your equity in the pot is \$25. Compare to "expected value".

expectation

1. Expected value.
2. One's typical win rate for a particular game, ignoring variance. That is, how much one expects to win (or lose) per hour or per hand over the long run.

expected value, EV
In probability theory, the overall expected payoff of a particular event, calculated by multiplying the probability of each possible outcome by the payoff from each. For example, if there are two possible outcomes from an event (say, flipping a coin), one of which pays \$2 and the other of which pays nothing, your EV for the event is \$1 (in the

long run, if this event happened many times, you would average \$1 per event). In poker, one generally associates an EV with a particular *action*. One's EV from calling a bet, for example, is the sum of all possible outcomes from calling the bet multiplied by the probability of each. Note that since a bet costs money to make, the payoff of some outcomes--and therefore the EV itself--may be negative.

exposed card

A card whose face has been deliberately or accidentally revealed to players normally not entitled to that information during the play of the game. Various games have different rules about how to handle this irregularity. Compare "boxed card".

F

family pot

A deal in which every (or almost every) seated player called the first **opening** bet.

fast

Aggressive. *I was afraid of too many chasers, so I played my trips fast.*

feeder

In a casino setting, a second or third table playing the same game as a "main" table, and from which players move to the main game as players there leave. Also called a "must-move table."

fence-hopper

See "hop the fence".

fifth street

1. The last card dealt to the board in community card games. Less common than river.
2. The fifth card dealt to each player in stud poker.

fill, fill up

To successfully draw to a hand that needs one card to complete it, by getting the last card of a **straight**, **flush**, or **full house**. *Jerry made his flush when I was betting my kings up, but I filled on seventh street to catch up.*

fire

To make the **opening** bet of a round, following the same analogy by which chips are called "ammo". *I called Ken's bet on fourth with a draw, but I bricked, and when he fired again I had to fold.* or *I think Randy suspected my earlier bet was a bluff, but when I fired a second shot he let it go.*

fish

1. An unskilled player, or an otherwise skilled player playing carelessly.
2. To risk money on a long-shot bet

fish hooks

1. Pair of jacks

five of a kind

A hand possible only in games with **wild cards**, defeating all other hands, comprising five cards of equal rank.

fixed limit, flat limit

A betting structure in which a player never chooses the amount to bet, only whether to bet a fixed amount or not. See [fixed limit](#).

flash

To show the bottom card of the deck while shuffling.

flat call

A [call](#), in a situation where one might be expected to [raise](#). *Normally I raise with jacks, but with three limpers ahead of me I decided to flat call.*

floorman, floorperson

A casino employee whose duties include adjudicating player disputes, keeping games filled and balanced, and managing dealers and other personnel. Players may shout "floor!" to call for a floorperson to resolve a dispute, to ask for a table or seat change, or to ask for some other casino service.

flop

In a [community card game](#), the first set of community cards dealt, and the betting round that follows. In [Texas hold 'em](#) and [Omaha hold'em](#) in particular, this involves a set of three community cards dealt before the game's second betting round. The verb flop is to catch something on the flop.

flop game

[Community card game](#).

flush

A hand comprising five cards of the same suit. See [flush](#).

fold

To relinquish one's cards, forfeiting any further interest in the pot for this deal.

forced bet

Money that a player is required to place into the pot by the rules of the game. The three common forms are [antes](#), [blinds](#), and [bring-ins](#).

forced-move

In a casino where more than one table is playing the same game with the same betting structure, one of the tables may be designated the "main" table, and will be kept full by requiring a player to move from one of the feeder tables to fill any vacancies. Players will generally be informed that their table is a "forced-move" table to be used in this way before they agree to play there. Also "must-move".

forward motion

A house rule of some casinos states that if a player in turn picks up chips from his stack and moves his hand toward the pot ("forward motion with chips in hand"), this constitutes a commitment to bet (or call), and the player may not withdraw his hand to check or fold. Such a player still has the choice of whether to call or raise.

foul hand

A hand that is ruled unplayable because of an irregularity, such as being found with too many or two few cards, having been mixed with cards of other players or the muck, having fallen off the table, etc. Compare "dead hand".

four-flush

Four cards of the same suit. A [non-standard poker hand](#) in some games, an incomplete drawing hand in most. See "bobtail", "four-straight".

four of a kind, fours

A hand containing four cards of equal rank. See [four of a kind](#).

four-straight

Four cards in rank sequence; either an open-end or one-end. A [non-standard poker hand](#) in some games, an incomplete drawing hand in most. See "bobtail", "four-flush".

fourth street

1. The fourth card dealt to the board in community card games. Less common than turn.
2. The fourth card dealt to each player in stud.

fox hunt

After a hand is over, a fox hunt means to reveal the next card that would have come up. If the next card would have been the final card, such as in a community card game with a fixed number of cards, this is called rabbit hunting. Such activity is usually prohibited in most casinos.

free card

A card dealt to one's hand (or to the board of [community cards](#)) after a betting round in which no player [opened](#). One is thereby being given a chance to improve one's hand without having to pay anything. *I wasn't sure my hand was good, but I bet so I wouldn't give a free card to Bill's flush draw.*

freeroll

1. A situation in which a player is guaranteed to at least break even and may possibly profit. Common in split-pot games. See [freeroll](#).
2. A [tournament](#) with no entry fee. Sometimes offered as a casino promotion, or as a reward for earlier play.

freezeout

A winner-take-all [tournament](#). That is, a game in which play continues until one player has all the chips.

full, full boat, full hand, full house

A hand with three cards of one rank and two of a second rank. The term "full hand" seems to have been the original, but today "full house" is standard. See [full house](#), "boat", "tight".

full bet rule

In some casinos, the rule that a player must wager the full amount required in order for his action to constitute a raise. For example, in a game with a \$4 fixed limit, a player facing an [opening](#) bet of \$4 who wagers \$7 is deemed to have flat called, because \$8 is required to raise. The alternative is the "half bet rule".

G

garbage

1. The muck.
2. A worthless hand.

gretzky

In games like [Texas hold 'em](#) to have pocket 9's. A reference to hockey player Wayne Gretzky's number 99.

grinder

A player who earns a living by making small profits over a long period of consistent, conservative play. See "rock".

guts, guts to open

1. A game with no opening hand requirement; that is, where the only requirement to open the betting is "guts", or courage.
2. Any of several poker variants where pots accumulate over several hands until a single player wins.

gutshot

An inside straight draw ("gutshot draw")

gypsy

To enter the pot cheaply by just calling the blind rather than raising. Also "limp".

H

half bet rule

In some casinos, the rule that placing chips equal to or greater than half the normal bet amount beyond the amount required to call constitutes a commitment to [raise](#) the normal amount. For example, in a game with a \$4 fixed limit, a player facing a \$4 [opening](#) bet who places \$6 in the pot is deemed to have raised, and must complete his bet to \$8. The alternative is the "full bet rule".

half kill

A kill for less than double the normal limits. For example, a \$6 game may have a kill for \$9 rather than the usual \$12.

half-pot limit

A [betting structure](#) resembling [pot limit](#), but which allows maximum raises of half the amount in the pot rather than the full amount.

hammer

1. To bet and raise aggressively. *Nora kept hammering, so I folded.*
2. "Having the hammer" is being in last position, especially head up. *You've got the hammer; I check to you.*
3. A "hammer lock" refers to a player with an almost 100% chance of winning the pot.
4. In [Texas Hold'em](#), [The Hammer](#) refers to a starting hand consisting of a **7-2 offsuit**.

hand

1. The set of cards played by one player.
2. A single instance of a game of poker, begun by shuffling the cards and ending with the award of a pot. Also called a "deal" (though both terms are ambiguous).

hand for hand

In [tournament](#) play, the act of equalizing the number of hands played at two or more tables by waiting for slower tables to finish each hand before beginning the next hand

on every table. This is usually done to ensure an accurate finishing order to distribute prize money.

hard

1. Aggressive and uncompromising, said of one's play. *Jim played me hard all night; I could never get a break.*
2. Chips, as opposed to paper money. *I gave the floorman \$100 for \$50 hard and \$50 soft.*

head up, heads up

Playing against a single opponent. *After Lori folded, Frank and I were head up for the rest of the hand.*

here kitty kitty

A conspicuously small bet made with a very powerful hand in the hope of getting a call from one or more opponents who would otherwise fold to a normal-sized bet.

high, high hand

The best hand using traditional [poker hand](#) values, as opposed to [lowball](#). Used especially in high-low split games.

high card

1. A [no pair](#) hand, ranked according to its highest-ranking cards.
2. To defeat another player by virtue of high-ranking cards, especially [kickers](#).
3. To randomly select a player for some purpose by having each draw one card, the highest of which is selected (for example, to decide who deals first). *When all the players get here, we'll high card for the button.* Often [high card by suit](#) is used for this purpose.

high-low, high-low split

Any of several games in which the pot is divided between the player with the best conventional poker hand and the best [lowball](#) hand.

high society

1. Large-denomination chips. Also "society".
2. \$10,000 worth of chips. *"Give me three stacks of high society."*

hit and run

To play for a short time, make money, and leave. Also called "chopping" a game.

hog, hogger

To win all of the pot in a split-pot game, for example, by having both the best high hand and best low hand simultaneously. Also called "scooping" the pot.

hole, hole card

1. Face-down cards. *I think Willy has two more queens in the hole.*
2. A seat, often preceded by a number relative to the button. *Sara opened from the 2-hole.*

Hollywood

Overt acting to deceive other players. *Karl had a big smile when he bet, but it seemed too Hollywood to me, so I called anyway.*

home game

A game played at a private venue (usually the home of one of the players), as opposed to a casino.

hop the fence

The enter the pot with a cold call.

horse

A player financially backed by someone else. *I lost today, but Larry was my horse in the stud game, and he won big.*

H.O.R.S.E.

A combination game with five games played in rotation: [Texas hold 'em](#), [Omaha hold'em](#), razz, [seven-card stud](#), and eight-or-better seven-card stud high-low. Other combinations of the letters are often seen as well: S.H.O.E., H.O.E., etc.

hunt

Looking further into the deck after the hand is over to see what cards would have come next (see also: fox hunt, rabbit hunt).

I

ice

A cold deck.

idiot end, ignorant end

The bottom end of a straight.

immortal

Unbeatable; often said of a hand that a player knows cannot be beaten under the circumstances of play. See also "lock", "nuts".

implied odds

Similar to pot odds, but including future bets one can reasonably expect to win. *I only had 3-to-1 pot odds for a 5-to-1 draw, but I knew if I made it I'd get two extra bets from Jim, so I called for the implied odds.*

improve

To achieve a better hand than one currently holds by adding or exchanging cards as provided in the rules of the game being played. *I didn't think Paula was bluffing, so I decided not to call unless I improved on the draw.*

inside, inside straight

A draw to a [straight](#) with a single missing rank in the interior, for example, 8-9-J-Q, seeking a 10. Sometimes used to describe a one-end straight, which is mathematically equivalent. Also "belly buster", "gutshot". Compare "bobtail", "open-ender".

insurance

A "business" deal in which players agree to split or reduce a pot (roughly in proportion to the chances of each of them winning) with more cards to come rather than playing out the hand, or else a deal where one player makes a side bet against himself with a third party to hedge against a large loss. This is usually done when one player is all in.

in the bushes, in the weeds

A player [sandbagging](#) is said to be "in the bushes" during the time he is quietly checking and calling while others bet aggressively. He will eventually "decloak".

in the middle

1. In a game with multiple **blinds**, an incoming player may sometimes be allowed to post the blinds "in the middle" (that is, out of their normal order) rather than having to wait for them to pass.
2. A player being whipsawed is said to be "in the middle".

in the money

To place high enough in a tournament to get prize money.

in turn

A player, or an action, is said to be in turn if that player is expected to act next under the rules. *Jerry said "check" while he was in turn, so he's not allowed to raise.*

irregular declaration

An action taken by a player in turn that is not a straightforward declaration of intent, but that is reasonably interpreted as an action by other players, such as rapping the table to signify "check", or pointing a thumb up to signify "raise". House rules or dealer discretion may determine when such actions are meaningful and/or binding.

irregularity

Any of a number of abnormal conditions in play, such as unexpectedly exposed cards, that may call for corrective action.

isolation

To play aggressively in order to drive out all but one specific opponent who you believe to be weak. *I reraised to isolate Diane because she's been playing junk all day.*

J

jack it up

To **raise**.

jackpot

1. A game of "jackpot poker" or "jackpots", which is a variant of **five-card draw** with an **ante** from each player, no **blinds**, and an **opening** requirement of a pair of jacks or better.
2. A large pool of money collected by the house and awarded for some rare occurrence, typically a bad beat.

jam

To **open** or **raise** the maximum amount allowed.

juice

Money collected by the house. See also "rake".

K

Kansas City low

Deuce-to-seven lowball.

keep (a bettor) honest

To call a final bet while not expecting to win, for the primary purpose of discouraging future bluffs.

kicker

1. A card not directly involved in evaluating a hand, but that may be used for breaking ties. See [kicker](#). Also "side card".
 2. A non-paired card kept before the draw in [draw poker](#) in hope of pairing it.
- kill, kill pot

1. An occasional hand played at double the usual stakes at an agreed-upon time; often when a player wins two hands in a row, or when a player scoops in a split-pot game. The "lucky" player is often required to post an extra [blind](#) for double the usual blind amount. See also "half-kill".
2. The custom of dealing one card face down to the side for each card dealt face up as community in community games. The cards dealt face down (not to any players) are out of play (have been killed) and ensure that the deck is not stacked.

kitty

A pool of money built by collecting small amounts from certain pots, often used to buy refreshments, cards, and so on. The home-game equivalent of a rake.

L

lady (ladies)

Queen(s)

laydown

A tough choice to fold a good hand in anticipation of superior opposition.

limit

The minimum or maximum amount of a bet.

limp in

To enter a pot by simply calling instead of raising.

live

Still raisable. A live bet is one which a player can raise even if they've already bet and everyone else has made a call, typically because the player posted a blind.

loose

A player who plays many hands, often including those that are of lesser value. Compare to "tight"; see also "aggressive", "passive".

lord crowley

Folding your hand out of turn when the action to check is an option.

low

1. The lowest card by rank.
2. The low half of the pot in a high-low split.

M

maniac

A loose and aggressive player. A player who bets constantly and plays many inferior hands.

match the pot

To put in an amount equal to all the chips in the pot.

misdeal

A deal which is ruined for some reason and must be redealt.

move in

In a no-limit game, to "move in" or to "go all in" means to bet one's entire stake on the hand in play. See [table stakes](#).

muck

1. To fold.
2. To discard one's hand without revealing the cards. Often done after winning without a showdown or at a showdown when a better hand has already been revealed.
3. The discard pile.

N

natural card

A card that isn't wild or otherwise modified by the game rules. In some houses, a natural hand beats an equivalent hand that uses wild cards, though this is not generally the case.

no-limit

A betting structure where players may wager as much as they like.

nuts, the

The best possible hand given the cards on the board.

O

offsuit

Cards that are not of the same suit. Example: the Ace of Clubs and the King of Spades is Ace-King Offsuit

open

To bet first.

openers

The cards held by a player in a game of "jackpots" entitling him to open the pot. "Splitting openers" refers to holding onto one of your openers after discarding it to prove you had the necessary cards to open should you win the pot.

option

An optional bet or draw, such as getting an extra card facedown for 50 cents or raising on the big blind when checked all the way around.

out of pocket

A game which gives the players the ability to add more money to their stack in the middle of a hand. See [table stakes](#).

outs

Cards remaining in the deck that can improve one's hand.

outside straight

A draw to a [straight](#) with a single missing rank in the exterior, for example, 10-J-Q-K, seeking an ace or a 9. Also "open-end straight", "two-way straight draw".
overcard

A community card with a higher rank than a player's pocket pair.
over the top

re-raising a player's raise, as in, "I opened the pot from early position, the button popped me back, but I came over the top all in and shut him out."

P

paint

The face cards, Jacks, Queens, and Kings, in a deck. In [Texas hold'em](#), a flop can be said to be "all paint" if it consists of only these cards.

pair

Two of the same cards in a given hand.

passive

An opponent who rarely raises. Compare to "aggressive"; see also "loose", "tight".

pat

Already complete. A hand is a pat hand when, say, a [straight](#) comes on the first five cards in [Texas hold'em](#).

pocket pair

In [Community card](#) or [Stud](#) poker, when two of a player's private cards make a pair.

poker face

A blank face that does not reveal anything about the cards being held. Often used metaphorically outside the world of poker.

pooted

Cards that are not of the same suit. This is the antonym of the term "suited", and is primarily used in the game of Texas Hold'em.

position bet

A bet that is made more due to the strength of the bettor's position than the strength of the bettor's cards.

post

To make the required small or big blind bet in [Texas Hold 'em](#) or other games played with blinds rather than antes

post dead

To post a bet amount equal to the small and the big blind combined (the amount of the large blind playing as a live blind, and the amount of the small blind as dead money). In games played with blinds, a player who steps away from the table and misses his turn for the blinds must either post dead or wait for the big blind to re-enter the game.

post-oak bluff

To bluff with a very small bet, in the hope that it will be perceived as a *here-kitty-kitty* bet.

pot

- The already-bet money or chips that players in the hand can win.

- To agree with a group of other players that the next pot-winner will pay for something, typically drinks or refreshments. *Joe, let's pot for the next round.*

pot limit

A limit where the maximum amount one can bet is the amount in the pot.

pot odds

The size of the pot in comparison to the bet. Example: in Hold 'em, the pot contains \$100, Joe bets \$10, and Ed ponders a call. Ed is getting pot odds of \$110:\$10, or 11:1 presto!

In Texas Hold 'em, a pair of 5's in the hole.

proposition player, prop

A player that gets paid an hourly rate to start poker games or to help them stay active. Prop players play with their own money, which distinguishes them from shills, who play with the casino's money.

protect

To put an object on one's cards to prevent them from being mucked.

push

To put yourself all-in.

Q

quads

Four of a kind.

quarter

To win a quarter of a pot, usually by tying the low or high hand of a [high-low split](#) game. Generally, this is an unwanted outcome, as it seldom wins enough money to cover the amount bet during the hand.

R

rabbit hunt

After a hand is over, a rabbit hunt means to reveal the last card that would have come up in a community card game with a fixed number of cards. Such activity is usually prohibited in casinos.

rack

1. A collection of 100 chips of the same denomination, usually arranged in 5 stacks in a plastic tray.
2. A plastic tray used for storing a rack of chips.

rags

Worthless (or apparently worthless) cards. Most often refers to small cards in high-hand games, while high cards in low games are more often called *bricks*.

rail

The rail is the sideline at a poker table - the (often imaginary) rail separating spectators from the field of play. Watching from the rail means watching a poker game as a spectator. People on the rail are sometimes called railbirds.

rainbow

Three or four cards of different suits, especially said of a Flop.

raise

1. To put in more money than the existing bet.
2. The amount raised.

rake

A fee taken by the house.

ram and jam

To aggressively bet, raise, and reraise on a draw to a strong hand. Similar to a come bet but a bit more aggressive.

rebuy

An amount of chips purchased after the buy-in.

redeal

To deal a hand again, possibly after a misdeal.

reraise

Raise after one has been raised. Also called "coming over the top."

ring game

A non-tournament poker game played for stakes, as in a casino or a serious home game.

river

The fifth card dealt in [communal card games](#) such as [Texas hold 'em](#). The verb river is to catch a winning card on the river

rob rob

Refers to the starting hand of 4-7, either suited or unsuited.

rock

A passive and tight player. The rock barely plays any hands at all. Aces and kings he loves, though. And when he gets them, he knows exactly how to play them. He is a good reader of the game who risks very few unexpected, big losses. He knows when his aces have been cracked.

rockets

A pair of aces as your hole cards.

rolled-up trips

In [seven-card stud](#), three of a kind dealt in the first three cards.

rounder

A gambler who makes their living entirely at cards. Rounding used to be illegal in the United States due to gaming laws, however many states have eased these and allowed "home" poker games to take place.

runner

A tournament entrant, a contestant.

runner-runner

a hand made by hitting two consecutive cards on the Turn and River. See also, "Backdoor", and "Bad Beat"

rush

a player who has won several big pots is said to be on a rush (example: Sue wins three hands out of five).

S

sailboats

Often referred in a Hold'em game as having a pocket pair of fours

sandbag

To play your hand slowly to gain an advantage in a tournament with a timed blinds structure. Sandbagging can also refer to wasting time before checking in a hand to lure opponents into thinking you have a poor hand. See [sandbagging](#).

satellite

A tournament in which the prize is a free entrance to another (larger) tournament.

scoop

In high-low split games, to win both the high and the low half of the pot.

semi-bluff

A large bet on a drawing hand. A strategy used because of its dual purpose of both possibly winning the pot immediately by forcing your opponents to fold, but still having the potential to win if you are called and subsequently make your hand. See "draw".

set

Three of a kind with two of the cards in the player's hole cards and the third card in the community cards. Often confused with "trips".

showdown

When the cards are revealed at the end of the game. Also used outside [poker](#) to mean facing up to an opponent.

side pot

A separate pot created to deal with the situation of one player going "all in". See [table stakes](#).

slow play

A strategy whereby good cards are played conservatively, with hopes that other players will keep playing the hand and build a larger pot.

slow roll

To expose only part of one's hand at the showdown with the intent of deceiving an opponent as to the actual strength of one's hand. Usually done by someone with a winning hand by first exposing a card or cards, waiting for a reaction from an opponent, and then exposing the remaining cards to show the winning hand. Considered distasteful and very poor etiquette. Also can refer to simply waiting to expose one's winning hand until after all other players have shown theirs.

speeding

To play very loose with no identifiable pattern, or to bluff frequently. Also known as speeding around.

spike

When a flop is spread out, if the first card revealed is the card an underdog needs, they spike that card. More loosely, if any of the flop cards help you, then you spike it. *I had Q9 to my opponent's pocket jacks, but I spiked a queen on the flop to take the lead.*

splash the pot

To throw one's chips in the pot in a disorderly fashion. Not typically allowed, because the dealer can't tell how much has been bet.

split

One share of a multi-way pot, such as the high hand in a high-low game.

spread

The range between a table's minimum and maximum bets.

stack

A collection of 20 chips of the same denomination, usually arranged in an orderly column.

stakes

The definition of the amount one buys in for and can bet. For example, a "low stakes" game might be a \$10 buy-in with a \$1 maximum raise.

stand pat

In draw poker, playing the original hand using no draws, either as a bluff or in the belief it is the best hand.

steal

In poker, the term steal is often used as merely a synonym for bluff, but there is a more specific use of the term. See [Steal](#)

steam

Act of playing recklessly when one is frustrated. Same as *tilt*.

steel wheel

A-2-3-4-5 of five consecutive cards of a single suit. Also known as a lock-lock in Omaha High/Low Split. It is the best possible hand in that game.

stop 'n go

When a player bets into another player who has previously raised or otherwise shown aggression. Example: On the flop, Bill bets into Tom, Tom raises, and Bill just calls. On the turn, Bill bets into Tom again. Bill has just pulled a stop 'n go.

straight

Hand of five consecutive cards which are not all the same suit.

straight flush

Hand of five consecutive cards of a single suit. The highest of these is the [royal flush](#), or 10 through Ace of one suit.

strategy card

A wallet sized card that is commonly used to help with poker strategies in online and casino games.

string bet

To call with one motion and raise with another. Not typically allowed.

stuck

Having lost money. *I'm stuck \$300 right now.*

stud

A card placed upwards in [Stud poker](#); also, that form of poker itself.

suck out

To draw a winning hand despite poor odds.

suited

- Cards that are of the same suit
super satellite
A multi-table tournament in which the prize is a free entrance to a satellite tournament or a tournament in which all the top finishers gain entrance to a larger tournament.
sweat
To sweat someone is to watch them play from the rail, in order to lend your support.

T

- table stakes
A rule that states that only money on the table at the beginning of a hand is playable, and that a player may not retrieve money from his or her wallet or purse during the play of a hand. This rule prevents abuse of all-in protection. See [table stakes](#) for further explanation.
tell
A motion or statement that gives away information about one's cards. See [tell](#).
throwing a party
A player who is playing like a fool and gambling all of their money away.
three of a kind
Three cards of the same rank.
tight
A player who rarely calls. Compare to "loose"; see also "aggressive", "passive".
tilt
To make reckless betting decisions as a result of frustration. Players showing this behavior are often said to be *on tilt*. See [tilt \(poker\)](#).
tourettes
To be dealt AK suited, only to see the remainder of the cards fail to give a hand any better than Ace High. *Mark was always suffering from tourettes.*
trips
Three of a kind with two of the cards in the community cards and the remaining card in the player's hole cards. Often confused with "set".
turn
The fourth card dealt in [communal card games](#) such as [Texas hold 'em](#).

U

- under the gun
The playing position to the direct left of the blinds in [Texas hold 'em](#) or [Omaha](#). The player who is under the gun must act first on the first round of betting.
upcard
A card that is dealt faceup.
up the ante
Increase the stake. Also commonly used outside the context of poker.

V

value bet

A bet made for the purpose of increasing the size of the pot, and which the player wants his opponents to call. This is in contrast to a bluff or a protection bet (though some bets may have a combination of these motives).

W

weak ace

an ace with a low kicker (e.g. three).

wheel

A 5-high [straight](#).

whipsaw

When a player is caught in the middle between two raisers and must call each bet because of the pot odds.

wild card

a card designated by the dealer before dealing (for instance all sevens) that may be used as any of the 52 cards to fill a hand. In some cases, wildcards can also be used to make five of a kind, a hand that is not possible using the standard 52-card deck. See also "bug".

wired pair

In [Community card](#) or [Stud](#) poker, when two of a player's private cards make a pair. Also called a "pocket pair."

Contents: Top - 0-9 [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

[Blind stud](#) | [Roll your own](#) | [Rollout](#) | [Twist](#) | [Slang names for poker hands](#)

Blind stud

Blind stud is [poker jargon](#) for a particular variant of [stud poker](#). Any stud poker game can be played "blind" by having all cards dealt face down.

Blind stud poker was a common practice in California cardrooms until 1985. The California gambling law makes specific games named by the law illegal, including twenty-one, faro, fantan, and "stud-horse poker". Until 1985, the California attorney general's office interpreted this to mean that [draw poker](#) was legal and all forms of stud poker were not, so California cardrooms played exclusively draw poker (mostly [lowball](#)). Because of this, blind stud was considered a form of draw poker, because like draw all cards are hidden. Unlike draw, players do not discard cards they intend to replace. In 1985, cardroom owners convinced the state that "stud-horse poker" was an obsolete house-banked game, and that all forms of modern poker were legal. Today, the most popular game in the state is [Texas hold 'em](#).

Not constrained by obscure California law, home games generally do not play blind stud, though some of the forms of blind stud are challenging and well-balanced, including some of those previously offered by California cardrooms. Some of cardrooms got very creative with blind stud games so they could offer players some variety. For example, a club in the Sacramento suburbs used to offer a seven-card high-low split blind stud game which was played 3-2-1-1 (four rounds; three cards dealt on the first, two on the second, then one and one), with two jokers in the deck acting as [bugs](#), and with the [double-ace flush](#) rule.

Roll your own

Roll your own is [poker jargon](#) used for a particular ruleset in certain [poker variants](#), particularly in [stud poker](#).

In traditional stud poker games, cards are simply dealt to each player, either face up or face down according to the rules of the game being played, followed by betting. In roll your own games this is different in one of three possible ways. These are called:

- simultaneous choose-after
- in turn choose-after
- choose-before

In *simultaneous choose-after* in every round where an upcard is normally dealt, each player is instead dealt a downcard. All players then look at all of their downcards and choose one to turn face up, then all players turn their chosen card at once.

In *in turn choose-after* the game begins the same way with each player being dealt a downcard, but then the first player to act (determined by the rules of the particular game) turns over his choice of upcard, then the next player can use that information to decide which of his cards to turn up, and then all players follow in turn.

Choose-before is always played in turn. On upcard rounds, before a card is dealt to each player, that player must choose whether he wants to receive it up or down. If he wants to receive it up, he says so. If he wants to receive it down, he must first turn one of his already-dealt downcards face up, so that all players will still have the same number of up and down cards. When using this method cards are not dealt to players starting at the dealer's left as usual, but start with the high hand showing.

Roll your own should not be confused with [rollouts](#), with which it has similarities, but is fundamentally different from.

Rollout

Rollout or **roll 'em out** is [poker jargon](#) used for a game phase in certain [poker variants](#). It is often incorrectly called "[roll your own](#)", to which it has similarities but is fundamentally different from.

Poker games with a rollout phase resemble [stud poker](#) but have significantly different strategies, because players generally receive all of their cards up front (sometimes with a draw phase), and know the final value of their hand in early betting rounds. They resemble stud poker only in that cards are revealed to other players one at a time for each betting round.

There are the same three variations on the idea as with roll your own, depending on when players are allowed to choose which card to reveal. They can either be forced to arrange the order of their cards before any betting begins ("choose before"), or they can be allowed to choose cards in later rounds based on information found in earlier rounds ("choose after"). In the latter case, the revealing can be made simultaneously or in turn.

In the game of [show five](#), for example, each player is dealt seven cards before any betting begins, and each of the game's five betting rounds begins with the players simultaneously revealing one of their cards ("simultaneous choose-after rollout"). Rollout games are frequently played [high-low split](#), and players choose which cards to reveal in order to delay as long as possible revealing which half of the pot they intend to win.

Twist

[Twist](#) is [poker jargon](#) for a round with specific rules which is sometimes used in the [poker variant](#) [stud poker](#).

One can replace any round of (or add a round to) a [stud poker](#) game with a twist round, in which each player is offered the option to replace exactly one card in his hand with a new one from the remaining deck stub. This is similar to the draw phase of [draw poker](#), differing in the following way: if the player chooses to replace a downcard, he discards it and is dealt a replacement card also face down; if he wishes to replace an upcard, he discards it and receives the replacement face up. On a twist round, players make the decision of which card to replace in turn starting with the player who bet first on the preceding round (usually the player whose upcards make the best hand), discarding the card they choose to replace, if any. After everyone has made their decision, the replacement cards are dealt starting at the dealer's left as usual.

Sometimes replacement cards are "bought" by requiring a player to add a fixed amount to the pot to be able to get a replacement.

Slang names for poker hands

In [poker](#), players may often use slang terms for particular types of [hands](#). Though most are recent neologisms, others date to poker's antiquity. All such slang terms typically connect a common concept (from life experience or storytelling) to the hand, in order to more easily characterize its general status relative to other hands.

- **Dead Man's Hand:** Two pair, aces and eights. This is the hand held by Wild Bill Hickok when he was shot and killed, and plays a relatively wide cultural role.
- **Pink, All Pink:** Flush of Hearts or Diamonds

- **Blue, All Blue:** Flush of Clubs or Spades
- **Puppy Feet, Pups:** Flush of Clubs
- **One Jack Off:** JJJxx
- **Four Pips:** AAAAx. (Each ace has one pip.)
- **Motown:** JJ55x (Jacks and Fives, Jackson Five)
- **Devil's hand:** 666xx (refering to the Number of the Beast in the Book of Revelation)
- **Wheel:** Ace to five low straight, also known as a Bicycle, or "The Name of the Game" in Bicycle.
- **Steel wheel:** Ace-to-five straight flush. So called because it's one of the strongest hands in the game (only beaten by higher straight flushes).
- **Big Bobtail:** An open ended 4 card straight flush.
- **Boat:** Short for **Full Boat** which means **Full House**, shorthanded as XXXs full of YYs, such as "Aces full of Jacks" where the hand is AAAJJ.
- **Klan Rally:** Three Kings (KKKxx). Also known as **Alabama Night Riders** and **Three Wise Men**
- **Trips,Set:** Three of a kind. The term "set" is usually used with the rank in question: "a set of Xs". In **hold 'em** games, the term *set* is used to refer to the situation when the player has three of a kind with a pair in the hole, but not when there is a pair or three of a kind on the board.
- **Quads,Quartet:** Four of a kind. When spoken, either "quad Xs" or "a quartet of Xs" (less common) would be used.
 - Sometimes, four-of-a-kind is jokingly referred to as "two pair". If the quads are of low rank, they're often called "two small pair." This description is almost always followed by "a pair of red Xs and a pair of black Xs," where X is the rank of the four-of-a-kind.
- Two pair is commonly shorthanded as **Xs up** or **Xs over Ys**, with the top pair as X and the bottom pair as Y. For example, KK998 would be "kings up" or "kings over nines".
- Full house is commonly referred to as **Xs full of Ys** where X is the three of a kind and Y is the pair. For example, 555KK would be "fives full of kings".

Texas Hold 'Em Slang

The following refer to hole (pocket) cards:

- A-A: **Pocket Rockets, American Airlines, Bullets, Two Pips**
- A-K: **Big Slick, Machine Gun (AK-47)**
 - A-K suited: **Anna Kournikova** ("looks great, never wins": players tend to overplay this hand; initials are also a play on AK)
- A-Q: **Little Slick, Mrs. Slick, Catch of the Day, Doyle Brunson** (see note at bottom)
- A-J: **Blackjack, Ajax, Apple Jacks, Jack Ass, Apple Juice**
- A-10: **Johnny Moss, Corners**
- A-8: **Dead Man's Hand** (by analogy with Wild Bill's aces and eights)

- A-3: **Baskin-Robbins** (plays off the number 31: 31 Flavors)
- A-2: **Michael Jackson** (Big hand touching little hand), **Hunting Season** (bullet and duck)
- K-K: **Cowboys, Penn and Teller, Elvis Presley, King Kong**
- K-Q: **Marriage, Royalty**
 - K-Q suited: **Royal Marriage**
 - K-Q offsuit: **Mixed Marriage**
- K-J: **Kojak, King John**
 - K-J offsuit: **Bachelor's Hand** (play on words: "Jack-King, off"), **Bill Fillmaff**
- K-9: **The Animal, Canine, Sawmill**
- K-8: **The NY Heart Attack** (a NYC player died holding this hand, April, 2005), **Kokomo**
- K-7: **Columbia River**
- K-3: **Seafood hand** (King Crab)
- K-2: **Steep Climb, Dr. Shakeoff, Dr. Love**
- Q-Q: **Ladies, Siegfried & Roy, Snowshoes, four tits, Wal-Mart Shoppers, The Hilton Sisters, Dykes**
- Q-J: **Oedipus, Maverick**
 - QS JD: **Pincochle**
- Q-10: **Q-Tip,Varkonyi** (named after Robert Varkonyi, 2002 World Series of Poker main event champion, who rather liked this hand)
- Q-9: **Quinine**
- Q-7: **Computer Hand** (supposedly, according to computer simulation, the median hand between generally profitable versus generally unprofitable Hold'em starting hands)
- QS-5S: **Granny Mae**
- Q-3: **Gay Waiter, San Francisco Busboy** ("Queen with a trey|tray")
 - Q-3 suited: **Posh Gay Waiter**
- J-J: **Fishhooks, Hooks, Jokers, Kid Dynamite** (after J. J. Evans), **Jay Birds**
- J-T: *Cloutier* (play on name: T.J. Cloutier)
- J-7: **Jack Daniel's**
- J-6: **Railroad hand**
- J-5: **Jackson Five, Motown, Redmond Special**
- J-4: **Flat tire** (play on words: "What's a jack for?")
- 10-10: **Rin Tin Tin**
- 10-8: **Rosary** (a Buddhist and Catholic rosary have 108 beads), **Hail Mary**
- 10-7: **Negreanu** (offsuit only) (Negreanu has said that this hand is his favourite hand as "it can make two flushes")
- 10-5: **Five and Dime, Woolworth** (becoming deprecated)
- 10-4: **Broderick Crawford, Good Buddy, Over and Out and Roger That** (radio code: 10-4 means "Over and Out")
- 10-2: **Doyle Brunson** (see note at bottom)
- 9-9: **Barbara Feldon, Wayne Gretzky, Pocket Poco** (along with 2-2), **German Virgin** ("nein, nein" (say nine, nine) means "no, no" in German)

- 9-8: **Oldsmobile**
- 9-5: **Dolly Parton** (she sang *Workin' 9 to 5*)
- 9-4: **Gold Rush, San Francisco** (both play off the number 49)
- 9-3: **Jack Benny** (deprecated: Jack Benny always claimed to be 39 years old)
- 9-2: **Montana Banana, Twiggy, Poco**
- 8-8: **Snowmen, Infinities**
- 8-6: **The Daily Dangler**
- 8-3: **Bloody Cheese**
- 7-7: **Walking Sticks, Sunset Strip, Hockey Sticks**
- 7-6: **Philadelphia, Union Oil**
- 7-5: **Pickle Man, Heinz, ketchup** (**play on number 57 found on bottles**)
- 7-4: **Double Down**
- 7-3: **Hachem** (offsuit only) (named for Joseph Hachem, winner of [World Series of Poker, 2005](#) who won the \$7.5 million prize with this hand when he flopped a straight)
- 7-2: **Beer Hand**
 - 7-2 offsuit: **The Hammer!**, Deadly Teddy Lee, Jamaican Air
 - 7-2 suited: Prom Night Teddy Lee
- 6-9: **Big Lick, Porno, Dinner for Two, Good Position, Sit On My Face**
 - 6-9 suited: Prom Night ("Sixty-nine suited")
- **6H-7H: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band**
- 6-6: **Route 66, Pocket Buddies, England** (Football World Cup winners in 1966)
- 6-5: **Retirement, Jägermeister**
- 5-5: **Presto, Speed Limit**
 - It is traditional to exclaim "Presto!" while revealing the pocket fives if the hand wins.
- 5-4: **Jesse James, Colt 45** (both play off the number 45), **Moneymaker** (winning hand of Chris Moneymaker, 2003 World Series of Poker Main Event champion)
- 4-4: **Sailboats, Midlife Crisis**
- 4-3: **George W. Bush** (the 43rd President of the United States)
- 4-2: **Lumberman's hand, Bill Clinton** (the 42nd President of the United States)
- 3-3: **Crabs, Larry Bird**
- 3-2: **Michael Jordan** (he wore number 23), **Can of Corn, Hooter Hand, Mississippi Slick**
- 2-2: **Ducks, Swans, Pocket Poco** (along with 9-9)

Sleepers

A-Q is called the "Doyle Brunson" because Brunson rarely played this hand. 10-2 is also called the Doyle Brunson because he won the [World Series of Poker](#) with it twice in a row (1976 and 1977).

In addition, two types of hands are called "**blackjack hands**":

- Hands which are naturals in blackjack: any ace with any face or ten.

- Hands whose numeric total is 11: 9-2, 8-3, 7-4, 6-5. (In Blackjack, such hands are ideal for doubling down.)

Omaha Slang

[Omaha](#) slang is not as well developed as Texas Hold'em. The game is not as widely played, and there is a much greater variety of hands, since the pocket is four cards. In the hole in [Omaha hold'em](#):

- A-K-4-7: **Assault Rifle**

Including the board, in Omaha hold 'em:

- four pairs: **Noah's Ark**

See also: [Poker jargon](#)

The saddle

The Saddle

The Saddle is slang for a poker table's fourth seat.

Seats are numbered starting on the casino dealer's left.

The Saddle is believed by some to be the best seat at a poker table because it has the best view of the action.

Poker anti-legend Justin Draughn is known for always sitting in the Saddle.

[Home](#) | [Up](#)

Poker equipment

The following is a list of standard equipment needed for a game of poker:

- **Cards:** Standard Anglo-American playing cards are used. In home games it is common to have two decks with distinct backs, and to shuffle the unused deck while each hand is in progress. Casinos typically change decks after 15 minutes of use, because the quality of the cards declines with each shuffling. For friendly home environments, this is not an issue, but some dealers can perform intentionally corrupt shuffles even with a lightly-worn deck. Poker players are advised to have at least one "back-up" deck on hand to replace decks with worn, soiled, or bent cards. High-quality plastic-coated cards can be purchased for approximately \$3.00, and last much longer than paper cards.

In some poker games, particularly [stud poker](#) it is not unusual for cards to become bent quickly, as players often read their "hole" cards by peeking at the corner rather than lifting the card. Card quality can be preserved for longer if players agree not to bend cards, and proper shuffling techniques are used.

Rarely, multiple decks are used in poker; however, this noticeably alters the game. Using additional decks will make certain hand configurations significantly more common than they are in single-deck poker.

- **Poker Chips:** Currency is difficult to stack or handle, so most poker games are played with **chips**, or coin-shaped tokens of uniform size and weight, usually 39mm wide and anywhere from 5 to 16 grams in weight, whose money value is determined by their color. Traditionally, poker chips were made of bone; however, modern casino chips are often made of clay. Clay chips (which can cost as much \$1.70 per chip, or \$850 for a set of 500) are considered the most upscale variety of poker chip. Another high-end variety of chips are ceramic chips, ceramic chips that can be customized easily cost around \$1 per chip. Plastic chips are also available, at a wide variety of quality levels.

The standard color scheme for poker chips is as follows: \$1 chips are white; \$5, red; \$10, blue; \$25, green; \$100, black; \$500, purple; \$1000, orange; \$5000, gray; \$10000, pink. There is no requirement that casinos use these colors, and there is much variance regarding the colors used for denominations above \$100.

- **Poker Table:** A typical poker game will have between two and ten players. For the sake of convenience, each player should be able to reach the central **pot**, so circular or oblong tables are best. A soft table top is preferred to facilitate picking up chips and cards.
- **Lammers:** Lammers are plastic, chip-shaped tokens with text written on them. Most commonly used is a "dealer button" with either the word "DEALER" or a "D" written on it; this item (also known as the *buck*) indicates who shall deal next. In a casino setting, lammers are also used to indicate which variant is being used, and whose turn it is to pay the blind.
- **Cut card:** This is a thick plastic card, the same size and shape of a playing card. The dealer will place the deck upon this card before dealing, in order to prevent

the accidental exposure of the bottom card of the deck. While rarely used in home games, the cut card is universal in casino play.

- **Timer:** If playing a [poker tournament](#), a timer is used to count down periods in which the blinds are at certain levels. When the timer reaches 0:00, the blinds go up, and if chips are no longer useful (say, the blinds have gone up to \$25 and \$50, so \$5 chips aren't needed any more), the unneeded chips are [converted](#) to higher valued ones.
- **Card protectors:** In games where all of a player's cards are facedown, some players use items like specialty chips or glass figures to place on top of their cards to protect them from being accidentally discarded.

Purchasing poker equipment

For most home games, high-quality plastic poker chips, still cheaper than clay chips, will suffice, though casinos generally prefer clay, considered the most authentic type of chip. Tables should have a soft surface; hard-surfaced "poker tables" are generally no more convenient than a standard dining table with a poker cloth. Card decks of reasonable quality can be purchased for about \$3 a piece, and it's best to have at least three of them on hand.

[Playing cards](#) | [Poker chips](#) | [Buck](#) | [Hole cam](#) | [Pokerspecs](#)

Poker chips

[Casino poker chips](#) are special tokens representing a fixed amount of money. Especially in cardrooms and casinos, poker chips are also known as [checks](#).

Construction and design

Poker chips are fabricated with complicated graphics and edge spot patterns intending to make them difficult to counterfeit. The process used to make these chips is a trade secret and expensive - typically done on high pressure compression molding machines.

The typical material of construction is not clay as is sometimes believed, but a ceramic material with clay added for texture and weight. The breakable, clay chips of the 1960s and 1970s are no longer manufactured. The clay composition of modern chips varies by manufacturer, and is typically very slight (1-10%).

The chips used in American Casinos generally weigh between 9.5 grams and 10 grams each. The chips sold for home use vary much more, depending on manufacturer and construction.

Common designs for home use depict the six faces of a dice or the suit symbols around the edge of the chip. They are typically manufactured with injection molding technology using ABS plastic. Some chips are molded around a small metal disc, called a slug, for weight.

Cigar Aficionado article on Collecting Chips includes more on their manufacture;[\[1\]](#)

Colors

The most common colors used at United States casinos to differentiate between chip denominations are:

- White or blue, \$1
- Pink, \$2.50
- Red, \$5
- Blue, \$10
- Green, \$25
- Black, \$100
- Purple, \$500

\$2.50 chips are almost exclusively used for blackjack tables, since a natural typically pays 3:2 and most wagers are in increments of \$5. However, the Tropicana Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey has used pink chips in \$7.50-\$15 and \$10-\$20 poker games. Low-denomination yellow chips can vary in value: \$20 by statute in Atlantic City and Illinois (which, oddly, also uses "mustard yellow" \$0.50 chips [2]); \$5 at most Southern California poker rooms; \$2 at Foxwoods' poker room in Ledyard, Connecticut and at Casino del Sol in Tucson, Arizona; and \$0.50 at Potawatomi Casino in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Blue chips are occasionally used for \$10, most notably by statute in Atlantic City. In Las Vegas and California, most casinos use blue or gray for \$1 chips.

Chips are commonly available in \$1000 denominations, depending on the wagering limits of the casino in question. Such chips are often yellow or orange and of a large size. Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and other areas which permit high wagers typically have chips available in \$5000, \$10000, \$25000, and higher denominations; the colors for these vary wildly.

European casinos use a similar scheme, though certain venues (such as Aviation Club de France) use pink for €2 and blue for €10. European casinos also use plaques rather than chips for high denominations (usually in the €1000 and higher range).

Casino-style chips can be bought for home games, but the price is approximately \$1 per chip.

Generic poker chip sets can be bought at a much lower price, less than \$0.20 per chip. These simulate the weight and feel of casino chips, but are of a very inferior quality.

Security

Each casino has a unique set of chips, even if the casino is part of a larger company. This distinguishes a casino's chips from others, since each chip and token on the gaming floor has to be backed up with the appropriate amount of cash. In addition, with the exception of Nevada, casinos are not permitted to honor another casino's chips.

The security features of casino chips are numerous. Artwork is of a very high resolution or of photographic quality. Custom color combinations on the chip edge (edge spots) are usually distinctive to a particular casino. Certain chips incorporate RFID technology, such as those at the new Wynn Casino in Las Vegas.

Counterfeit chips are rare. High levels of surveillance, along with staff familiarity with chip design and coloring, make passing fake chips difficult. Casinos, though, are prepared for this situation. According to wizardofodds.com, on one such occasion, the casino removed all chips from the gaming floor and replaced them with new sets with alternative markings, which resulted in the arrest of the attempted counterfeiters.

Casino chips used in tournaments are usually much cheaper and much simpler in design. Because the chips have no cash value, usually chips are designed with a single color (usually differing in shade or tone from the version on the casino floor), a smaller diameter, and a basic mark on the interior to distinguish denominations; however, at certain events (such as the World Series of Poker or other televised poker), chips approach quality levels of chips on the floor.

Buck

In the card game [Poker](#) the **buck** or **button** is a marker used to indicate the player who is the dealer or, in casino games with a house dealer, the player who acts last on that deal (who would be the dealer in a home game).

When Poker became a popular saloon game in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century the integrity of the players was unreliable and the honor codes that had regulated gambling for centuries became inadequate. Because the dealer has the greatest opportunity to cheat (by manipulating the specific cards that players receive and by seeing the faces of the dealt cards) the players took turns in this role. To avoid arguments about whose turn it was to deal, the person who was next due to deal would be given a marker. A knife was a common object used as such a marker, and the marker became generally known as a buck as an abbreviated reference to the buck's horn that formed the handle of many knives at that time.

When the dealer had finished dealing the cards he 'passes the buck'. According to Martin, the earliest use of the phrase in print is in the July 1865 edition of *Weekly New Mexican*: "They draw at the commissary, and at poker after they have passed the buck.". The phrase then appears frequently in many sources so it probably originated at about this time.

The use of other small disks as such markers led to the alternative term "button". Silver dollars were later used as markers and it has been suggested that this is the origin of "buck" as a slang term for "dollar," though by no means is there universal agreement on this subject.

US president Harry S. Truman's use of the slogan "the buck stops here" in speeches, and on a sign on his desk, derives from the adoption of the phrase "passing the buck" as a metaphor for avoiding responsibility.

See also

- [Poker jargon](#)

Hole cam

In [poker](#), a **hole cam** is a camera that displays a player's hole cards (face-down cards) to television viewers. It was patented by Harry Orenstein in 1997.

The hole cam became popular when the Late Night Poker program first began using it in televised tournaments. It picked up further popularity after the [World Poker Tour](#) began airing in 2003 on the Travel Channel.

Pokerspecs

Pokerspecs are a new design of sunglasses, invented by Graham Hiew, and made especially for poker players. They débuted at the [World Poker Series](#) in July 2005. Pokerspecs work by tilting the lenses so that a [poker](#) player is able to see his cards, but not reveal his eyes to his opponents.

Gambling

Gambling has had many different meanings depending on the cultural and historical context in which it is used. Currently, in western society, it generally has an economic definition and meaning and typically refers to "wagering money or something of material value on something with an uncertain outcome in hope of winning additional money or material goods". Furthermore:

- the outcome of the wager is typically evident within a short period of time
- the primary intent of the bet is to win additional money or material goods

This definition of gambling usually excludes:

- emotional or physical risk-taking where what is being risked is not money or material goods (e.g., skydiving, running for office, asking someone for a date, etc.)
- buying insurance, as the primary intent of the purchase is to protect against loss, rather than to collect or win
- all forms of long-term 'investment' (stock market, real estate) with positive expected returns and economic utility
- starting a new business, as time and effort are also being wagered and the outcome is not determined in a short period of time
- situations where the possibility of winning additional money or material goods is a secondary or incidental reason for the wager/purchase (e.g., buying a raffle ticket to support a worthy cause)

Gambling varies on four dimensions:

- 1. What is being wagered (money or material goods).
- 2. How much is being wagered.
- 3. The predictability of the event. For some things such as lotteries, slot machines and bingo, the results are random and unpredictable. No skill or system will give you any advantage. For other things such as sports betting and horse racing there is some predictability to the outcome. In this situation greater knowledge and skill gives a person an advantage over other bettors.
- 4. The 'expected value', the positive or negative mathematical expectation.

Legal aspects

Because religious authorities generally frown on gambling to some extent, and because of various perceived social costs, most legal jurisdictions censure gambling to some extent. Islamic nations officially prohibit gambling; most other countries regulate it. In particular, in the majority of circumstances - and perhaps all cases - the law does not recognise wagers as contracts, and views any consequent losses as *debts of honour*, unenforceable by legal process. Thus organized crime often takes over the enforcement of large gambling debts, sometimes using violent methods.

Because contracts of insurance have many features in common with wagers, legislation generally makes a distinction, typically defining any agreement in which either one of the parties

has an interest in the outcome bet upon, beyond the specific financial terms, as a contract of insurance. Thus a bet on whether one's house will burn down becomes a contract of insurance, as one has an independent interest in the security of one's home.

Furthermore, many jurisdictions, local as well as national, either ban or heavily control (*license*) gambling. Such regulation generally leads to gambling tourism and illegal gambling - the latter often under the auspices of organized crime. Such involvement frequently brings the activity under even more severe moral censure and leads to calls for greater regulation. Conversely, the close involvement of governments (through regulation and gambling taxation) has led to a close connection between many governments and gambling organisations, where legal gambling provides much government revenue.

There is generally legislation requesting that the odds in gambling machines are fair (i.e. statistically random), to prevent manufacturers from making some high-payoff results impossible (since these have very low probability, this can quite easily pass unnoticed).

Psychological aspects

Though many participate in gambling as a form of recreation or even as a means to gain an income, gambling, like any behavior which involves variation in brain chemistry, can become a psychologically addictive and harmful behavior in some people. Reinforcement phenomena may also make gamblers persist in gambling even after repeated losses. Because of the negative connotations of the word "gambling", [casinos](#) and race tracks often use the euphemism "gaming" to describe the recreational gambling activities they offer.

The Russian writer Dostoevsky portrays in his short story *The Gambler* the psychological implications of gambling and how gambling can affect gamblers. He also associates gambling and the idea of "getting rich quick", suggesting that Russians may have a particular affinity for gambling. Dostoevsky shows the effect of betting money for the chance of gaining more in 19th-century Europe. The association between Russians and gambling has fed legends of the origins of Russian roulette.

Help for addictive gamblers

Many organizations exist to help individuals with a gambling addiction. They include Gamblers Anonymous and [Gambler's Help](#)(Australia).

Types of gambling

Casino games

"Beatable" casino games

With proper strategy, a smart player can create a positive mathematical expectation.

- [Poker](#) (Also recognised as a [game of skill](#))
- Blackjack -- with card counting
- [Video poker](#) -- with proper pay table and/or progressive jackpot
- [Pai Gow Poker](#) and Tiles -- player-dealt

- Sports betting
- Horse racing (parimutuel)
- Slot machines -- only linked, multi-player jackpots whose prizes have reached a certain point

"Unbeatable" casino games

These have a negative expectation, players as a group will lose in the long run (unless they cheat).

- Baccarat
- Craps
- Roulette (unless physical prediction is used)
- Keno
- Casino war
- Faro (All but extinct)
- Pachinko
- Sic Bo
- Let It Ride
- 3-card Poker
- 4-card poker
- Red Dog
- Pyramid Poker
- Caribbean Stud Poker
- Spanish 21 -- without counting

Non-casino gambling games

- Lottery
- Mahjong
- Fan-Tan
- Dice-based
 - Backgammon
 - Liar's dice
 - Passe-dix
 - Hazard
 - Threes
- Card games
 - Liar's poker
 - Bridge
 - Basset
 - Lansquenet
 - Piquet
 - Put
- Coin-tossing
 - Head and Tail

- Two-up (Australian casinos offer versions of two-up)
- Confidence tricks
 - Three card monte
 - The shell game
- Carnival Games
 - The Razzle
 - Hanky Pank
 - Penny Falls
 - Six-Cat
 - The Swinger
 - The Push-up Bottle
 - The Nail Joint
- Con Games (in bars)
 - Put and Take
 - The Smack
 - The Drunken Mitt

Fixed-odds gambling

Fixed-odds gambling and Parimutuel betting frequently occur at or on the following kinds of events:

- Horse racing (see below)
- Greyhound racing
- Jai alai
- Football matches (particularly on Association and American football)
- Golf
- Tennis
- Cricket
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Ice hockey
- Rugby (League and Union)
- Snooker
- Motor Racing
- Boxing
- Darts

In addition many bookmakers offer fixed odds on a number of non-sports related outcomes, for example the direction and extent of movement of various financial indices, whether snow will fall on Christmas Day in a given area, the winner of television competitions such as *Big Brother*, and so forth. Interactive prediction markets also offer trading on these outcomes, with "shares" of results trading on an open market.

See *Sports betting* below.

Gambling on horse races

One of the most widespread forms of gambling involves betting on horse races, most commonly on races between thoroughbreds or between standardbreds.

Wagering may take place through parimutuel pools; or bookmakers may take bets personally. Parimutuel wagers pay off at prices determined by support in the wagering pools, while bookmakers pay off either at the odds offered at the time of accepting the bet; or at the median odds offered by track bookmakers at the time the race started.

In Canada and the United States, the most common types of bet on horse races include:

- **win** – to succeed the bettor must pick the horse which wins the race.
- **place** – the bettor must pick a horse which finishes either first or second.
- **show** – the bettor must pick a horse which finishes first, second, or third.
- **exacta, perfecta, or exactor** – the bettor must pick the two horses which finish first and second and specify which will finish first
- **quinella or quiniela** – the bettor must pick the two horses which finish first and second, but need not specify which will finish first.
- **trifecta or triactor** – the bettor must pick the three horses which finish first, second, and third and specify which will finish first, second and third.
- **superfecta** – the bettor must pick the four horses which finish first, second, third and fourth, and specify which will finish first, second, third and fourth.
- **double** – the bettor must pick the winners of two successive races; most race tracks in Canada and the United States take double wagers on the first two races on the program (the **daily double**) and on the last two (the **late double**).
- **triple** – the bettor must pick the winners of three successive races; many tracks offer **rolling triples**, or triples on any three successive races on the program. Also called **pick three**.
- **sweep** – the bettor must pick the winners of four or more successive races. In the US, this is usually called **pick four** and **pick six**, with the latter paying out a consolation return to bettors correctly selecting five winners out of six races, and with "rollover" jackpots accumulating each day until one or more bettors correctly picks all six winners.

Win, place and show wagers class as **straight bets**, and the remaining wagers as **exotic bets**. Bettors usually make multiple wagers on exotic bets. A **box** consists of a multiple wager in which punters bet all possible combinations of a group of horses in the same race. A **key** involves making a multiple wager with a single horse in one race bet in one position with all possible combinations of other selected horses in a single race. A **wheel** consists of betting all horses in one race of a bet involving two or more races. For example a 1-all daily double wheel bets the 1-horse in the first race with every horse in the second.

People making straight bets commonly employ the strategy of an 'each way' bet. Here the bettor picks a horse and bets it will win, and makes an additional bet that it will show, so that theoretically if the horse runs third it will at least pay back the two bets. The Canadian and American equivalent is the bet across (short for *across the board*): the bettor bets equal sums on the horse to win, place, and show.

In Canada and the United States punters make exotic wagers on horses running at the same track on the same program. In the United Kingdom bookmakers offer exotic wagers on horses at different tracks. Probably the **Yankee** occurs most commonly: in this the bettor tries to pick the

winner of four races. This bet also includes subsidiary wagers on smaller combinations of the chosen horses; for example, if only two of the four horses win, the bettor still collects for their double. A **Trixie** requires trying to pick three winners, and a **Canadian** or **Super Yankee** trying to pick five; these also include subsidiary bets. The term **nap** identifies the best bet of the day.

A **parlay** (US) or **accumulator** (UK) consists of a series of bets in which bettors stake the winnings from one race on the next in order until either the bettor loses or the series completes successfully.

(Similarly, greyhound racing offers a popular betting alternative to horse racing in many countries.)

Sports betting

Betting on team sports has become an important service industry in many countries. For example, millions of Britons play the football pools every week. At sports betting, players may beat the bank.

Most jurisdictions in Canada and the United States regard sports betting as illegal (Nevada offers full sports betting and the Canadian provinces offer Sport Select - government-run sports parlay betting). However, millions engage in sports betting despite its illegality.

In Canada and the United States the most popular sports bets include:

- against the spread - the bettor wagers either that the favoured team will win by a specified number of points or that it will not. *Giving the points* involves betting the favourite, and *taking the points* means betting the underdog. See point spread. A team covers the spread if it wins the game with the score modified by the spread. If Dallas and Washington are playing and the spread is (Dallas -7), then Dallas has to win by at least 8 points to cover. Half-point spreads are also possible and the spread may not change.
- against odds - the most popular types of bets against odds comprise simple bets that a team will win and *over-under* (bets on the total points, runs, or goals scored by both teams). In making an over-under bet, the bettor wagers that the total will exceed or fall short of a total specified by the bookmaker.
- against a combination of odds and spread

In sports betting, a **parlay** involves a bet that two or more teams will win. In the United States gamblers have made the parlay card one of the most common forms of sports betting: here bettors wager on the outcomes of two or more games. If all their picks win, they collect. Most such betting occurs in workplaces.

Scratchcards

A scratchcard is a small piece of card where an area has been covered by a substance that cannot be seen through, but can be scratched off. Under this area are concealed the items/pictures that must be 'found' in order to win.

The generic scratchcard requires the player to match three of the same prize amounts. If this is accomplished, they win that amount. Other scratchcards involve matching symbols, pictures or words.

Scratchcards are a very popular form of **gambling** due to their low cost. However, the low cost to buy a scratchcard is offset by the smaller prizes, compared to **casino** jackpots or lottery wins.

Other types of betting

One can also bet with another person that a statement is true or false, or that a specified event will happen (a "back bet") or will not happen (a "lay bet") within a specified time. This occurs in particular when two people have opposing but strongly-held views on truth or events. Not only do the parties hope to gain from the bet, they place the bet also to demonstrate their certainty about the issue. Some means of determining the issue at stake must exist. Sometimes the amount bet remains nominal, demonstrating the outcome as one of principle rather than of financial importance.

Arbitrage betting

Arbitrage betting, deceptively advertised as no-risk or risk-free betting, is a special case of betting on events offered by betting websites which is not gambling but rather an unusual investment practice.

Staking systems

Many people have formulated staking systems in an attempt to "beat the bookie", but most still accept that no staking system can make an unprofitable system profitable over time. Widely-used systems include:

- Fixed stakes – a traditional system of staking the same amount on each selection. This method suits conservative punters if the stake remains below 5% of the bank.
- Fixed profits – the stakes vary based on the odds to ensure the same profit from each winning selection. This method suits conservative punters well, although if the profitability of one's bets varies independently of the odds the bettor simply reduces his or her cash flow.
- Due-column betting – A variation on fixed profits betting in which the bettor sets a target profit and then calculates a bet size that will make this profit, adding any losses to the target. For example, to make a target of \$100 profit a bettor would wager \$50 at odds of 2 to 1. If the bet loses, the target becomes \$150. If the next bet is also at odds of 2 to 1, the wager therefore becomes \$75. This type of wagering can prove ruinous in the long run.
- Kelly (optimal) – the punter needs to estimate fair odds (in the European/decimal format) and then calculate the stake using :

Stake= $(\text{Odds}/(\text{Fair odds}-1))/(\text{Odds}-1)$ Many times used with a divider (most commonly 4 or 8) depending on your bankroll (for betting)

- Martingale – A system based on staking enough each time to recover losses from previous bet(s) until one wins. It is usually applied to even-money bets

such as red/black on roulette. The Martingale guarantees failure in the long run - it would only work if the bettor has an unlimited bankroll, the bookmaker has no limit on the size of bets and neither party ever dies. However, it can usually be used to gain a small win in the short run, given a bankroll large enough to survive a streak of five or six losses.

List of notable wagers

- The man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo
- Pascal's wager
- St. Petersburg paradox
- The wager in Around the World in Eighty Days
- Wager between John Pierpoint Morgan and Hugh Cecil Lowther, 5th Earl of Lonsdale on whether a man could walk round the world and remain unidentified
- Wager between Julian Simon and Paul Ehrlich on commodity prices
- The annual Nenana Ice Classic, when the inhabitants of Alaska bet on when the ice will break on the Tanana River.
- Wager on Black hole information paradox: Stephen Hawking and Kip Thorne against John Preskill

Associated word usage

- The English expression "I bet that xxxx", meaning "I consider it very probable that xxxx", need not carry any suggestion of the speaker intending to gamble.
- The English word hazard originated as Arabic *az-zr* or *al-zr*, which meant a type of dice game. Compare also the English word "dicey" meaning "risky".
- Scientists have dubbed certain random-number-based calculation algorithms the "Monte Carlo method".
- **Even money**, as a gambling term, describes a wagering proposition with even odds - in other words, if one loses a bet, one stands to lose the same amount of money that the winner of the bet would win (less, of course, the vigorish or "juice"). The term has come to have meaning in the wider English usage beyond actual gambling, however, as a way of describing an event whose occurrence is about as likely to occur as not, as in "It's even money that it will rain today". Compare *50 50*.

By country

- Gambling in the People's Republic of China
- Gambling in France
- Gambling in Hong Kong (PRC)
- Gambling in Italy
- Gambling in Macau (PRC)

- Gambling in Monaco
- Gambling in Taiwan
- Gambling in the United Kingdom
- Gambling in the United States
- Gambling in Brasil

See also

- [Casino](#)
- [online gambling](#)
- [Online casino](#)
- [casino game](#)

Bibliography

- Brisman, Andrew. *American Mensa Guide to Casino Gambling: Winning Ways* (Stirling, 1999) ISBN 080694837X
- Ortiz, Darwin. *Gambling Scams: How They Work, How to Detect Them, How to Protect Yourself* (Carol, 1990) ISBN 0396083668 (Hardcover) ISBN 0818405295 (Paperback)
- Reith, Gerda. *Age of Chance: Gambling in Western Culture* ISBN 0415179971 (Hardcover) ISBN 0415263093 (Paperback)
- Steinmetz, Andrew. *The Gaming Table: Its Votaries and Victims* Gutenberg text
- Thorp, Edward O. *Beat the Dealer: A Winning Strategy for the Game of Twenty-One* (Vintage, 1966) ISBN 0394703103

[Game](#) | [Game classification](#) | [Online gambling](#)

Game

A **game** is an (often, but not always recreational) activity involving one or more players. This can be defined by either a goal that the players try to reach, or some set of rules that determines what the players can or can not do. Games are played primarily for entertainment or enjoyment, but may also serve as exercise or in an educational, simulational or psychological role.

Definition

Although many animals play, only humans confirmably have games. Whether some animals are intelligent enough to game is debatable, though a game has ritualistic elements (such as rules and procedures) that are voluntarily acted upon, rather than as a result of instinct. The existence of rules and criteria that decide the outcome of games imply that games require intelligence of a significant degree of sophistication.

Non-human animal species may, however, engage in games whose rules and sophistication may be of such a nature as to be incapable of detection by humans in their present state of knowledge. It would, for example, seem incongruous that large brained species such as many Cetaceans and the larger hominids did not play games. Our inability to observe and understand such games should not be taken as a confirmation that they do not exist. Some courtship displays by some species of bird, such as the Black Grouse, appear to have a component which, from an anthropological view, might appear to be a game in which there are clearly winners and losers.

Games can involve one player acting alone, or two or more players acting cooperatively. Most often involve competition among two or more players. Taking an action that falls outside the rules generally constitutes a foul or [cheating](#).

All through human history, people have played games to entertain themselves and others. There are an enormous variety of games; for specific information about different types of games, see the links at the end of this article.

Philosopher David Kelley, in his popular introductory reasoning text *The Art of Reasoning*, defines the concept "game" as "a form of recreation constituted by a set of rules that specify an object to be attained and the permissible means of attaining it." This covers most cases well, but does not quite fit with things like war games and sports, which often are not played for entertainment but to build skills for later use.

The recent popularity of video game studies has led to renewed interest in game definitions.

Games in philosophy

In *Philosophical Investigations*, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that the concept "game" could not be contained by any single definition, but that games must be looked at as a series of definitions that share a "family resemblance" to one another. Games were important to Wittgenstein's later thought; he held that language was itself a game, consisting of tokens governed by mutually agreed upon rules that governed the usage of words.

Stanley Fish, looking for a clear example of the sorts of social constructions, cited the balls and strikes of baseball as example. While the strike zone target is governed by the rules of the game, it epitomizes the category of things that exist only because people have agreed to treat them as real. No pitch is a ball or a strike until it has been labelled as such by an appropriate authority, the plate umpire, whose judgment on this matter cannot be challenged within the current game.

Many technical fields are often applied to the study of games, including probability, statistics, economics, ethnomathematics, and [game theory](#).

Anthropology of games

Games, being a characteristic human activity strongly determined by custom and the frequent subjects of folklore, have been the subject of anthropological investigations.

Classes of games

While many different subdivisions have been proposed, anthropologists classify games under three major headings, and have drawn some conclusions as to the social bases that each sort of game requires. They divide games broadly into:

- Games of pure skill, such as hopscotch and target shooting;
- Games of pure strategy, such as checkers, go, or tic-tac-toe;
- Games of chance, such as craps and snakes and ladders.

In addition to these basic classifications, there are mixed games; such as football, partly a game of skill and partly a game of strategy; [poker](#), partly a game of strategy and partly a game of chance; and baseball, which combines elements of all three. Baseball Hall of Famer Casey Stengel underscored this point when he remarked, "I had many years when I was not so successful as a ballplayer, as it is a game of skill."

Games of pure skill are likely the oldest sort of game, and are found in all cultures, regardless of their level of material culture. They are associated with cultures that place a high value on individual performance and prowess.

Games of strategy require a higher material basis. They are associated with cultures that possess a written language: not surprising, since most strategy games are based on mathematics and feature the manipulation of symbols. They often require special equipment to be played. They are associated with hierarchical societies that place a high value on obedience.

Games of chance appear at a variety of levels of material culture; what they seem to share generally is a sense of economic insecurity. They are associated with cultures that place a high value on personal responsibility, keeping one's word, and maintaining personal standing in the face of misfortune; in other words, with "cultures of honor".

Games and sports

There is no clear line of demarcation between games and sports. Generally, sports are athletic in nature, and have an element of physical prowess, but then so do many games. For cultural anthropologists, the distinction between games and sports hinges on community involvement. Sports often require special equipment and playing fields or prepared grounds dedicated to their practice, a fact that often makes necessary the involvement of a community beyond the players themselves. Most sports can have spectators. Communities often align themselves with players of sports, who in a sense represent that community; they often align themselves against their opponents, or have traditional rivalries. The concept of fandom began with sports fans. Games amuse the players; sports amuse a broader public; in advanced material cultures, sports can be played by paid professionals. When games like chess and go are played professionally, they take on many of the characteristics of a sport.

One-person games

One-person games or one-player games are sometimes called solitaire games, but this term can be easily confused with the peg game and the card game of same name.

Types of one-player games include:

- many arcade games
- most computer and video games

- juggling
- most types of puzzles (logical, mechanical, mathematical, etc.)
- solitaire card games

Types of games

main article: [Game classification](#)

- Alternate reality game
- Ball games
- Board games
- Business games
- Car games
- [Card games](#)
 - Collectible card games
- [Casino games](#)
- Children's games
- Clapping games
- Computer and video games
 - Computer board games
 - Computer puzzle games
 - Internet games
 - Online skill-based games
 - MUDs
 - MMORPGs
- Conversation games
- Counting-out games
- Creative games
- Dice games
- Drinking games
- Educational games
- Economics games
- Game shows
- [Games of chance](#)
- Games of dare
- Games of logic
- Games of physical activity
- Games of physical skill
- Games of skill
- Games of strategy
- Games of status
- Global Positioning System-based games
- Group-dynamic games
- Guessing games
- Letter games

- Locative games
- The Losing Game
- Mathematical games
- New Games
- Open gaming
- Party games
- Parlour games
- Pencil and paper games
- Play-by-mail games
- Playground games
- Political games
- Puzzles
- Quizzes
- Role-playing games
- Singing games
- Spoken games
- String games
- Table-top games
- Tile-based games
- Theater games
- Traditional games
- Unclassified games
- Wargames
- Win-win games
- Word games

See also

- [Game theory](#)

References

- Avedon, Elliot; Sutton-Smith, Brian, *The study of games*. (Philadelphia: Wiley, 1971), reprinted Krieger, 1979. ISBN 0898740452

Game classification

[Games](#) may be classified and sub-classified according to many different criteria. Each scheme has its own advantages and disadvantages.

- What sort of **challenge** / **skill** is involved (e.g. abstract calculation, anagramming, luck, bluffing, verbalizing, coordination, speed, etc.)?

This leads to the "Folk Model" theory of 4 categories: [games of skill](#), [games of chance](#), games of strategy, Simulation game propagated by Anderson/Moore and Brian Sutton-Smith. This scheme is probably most natural, and quite neatly separates billiards from chess from Tomb Raider. The main disadvantage is that too many games fall under more than one head. For example Scrabble relies a great deal on word knowledge and anagramming, but also has significant strategic aspects.

Games of skill can be further subdivided into physical-skill games and mental-skill games.

- What **equipment** is used to play the game (e.g. a computer, a board, cards, tiles, dice, etc.)?

This categorization is also very natural and common, but sometimes problematic. For example, Balderdash is a commercial board game, whereas Fictionary is almost identical but uses no board.

This scheme seems odd since it forces similar games to be listed under completely different headings.

Other distinctions are less important, and apply more or less well to different major headings.

For example, the difference between team and individual sports is fundamental, whereas team board games are so rare as to hardly merit a category. The remaining distinctions apply mostly to non-physical games.

- **How many players** does the game accommodate?

The most important division is between two-player and multiplayer games, because nearly all multiplayer games involve negotiation or coalition-building to some degree. Among multiplayer games it is also important (particularly to whoever is organizing the party) what range in the number of players can be accommodated. One disadvantage of this distinction is that a few games such as Titan are equally good two-player or multiplayer.

- To what extent to which **chance** is a factor?

Games run the gamut from having no chance whatsoever (checkers, Pente) to being entirely determined by chance (roulette, Chutes and Ladders).

- How deep is the **strategy**?

Some games (bridge, Go) can be studied for years without exhausting what there is to learn, whereas others (Three Men's Morris) can be mastered relatively easily.

- **How easy** is it to learn the **rules** of the game?

Chess and Go are often compared for their depth and abstraction, but chess has considerably more difficult rules. This consideration is particularly important for family games, where ideally children should be able to play along easily, without making the game so simple it holds no interest for adults.

- Is the game relatively **abstract** or does it attempt to simulate some aspect of reality (e.g. stock market, war scenarios)?

For some simulation games, the realism is more important than all other factors, whereas some games (Set) are so abstract that the names and shapes of all the pieces could change without affecting playability. However, most games lie somewhere in between, with a balance between abstraction and simulation.

- **Are players eliminated** as the game progresses, or can everyone play along until the end?

This is most important socially, as a host may wonder how to entertain guests who have been knocked out of the main event.

- What is the **objective** of the game?

This is most useful as a sub-subheading, because different types of games tend to have different types of objectives. For example, [card games](#) have natural categories of trick-taking and shedding games, which don't apply to board games, whereas board games have categories of capture, racing, and immobilization which don't apply to card games.

[Game of skill](#) | [Card games](#)

Game of skill

A **game of skill** is a [game](#) where the outcome is determined mainly by mental and/or physical skill, rather than by pure [chance](#).

One benefit of games of skill is that they are a means of exploring one's own capabilities. Games encourage people to look at, understand, and experience things. They teach people lessons about themselves and possibly the world, and allow such insights to be passed on to others.

- Board games
- [Card games](#)
- Educational games
- Letter games
- Mind sports
- Mathematical games
- Play-by-mail games
- Puzzle games
- Guessing games
- Pencil and paper games
- Word games
- Online skill-based games
- Games of physical skill

See also

- [Game classification](#)

Card games

A **card game** is any [game](#) using [playing cards](#), either traditional or game-specific.

Seating of players

When a card game is played, the players arrange themselves in a circle around a horizontal surface on which the cards will be played. This surface is usually a table, although any flat surface can be used. The players face inwards, and are approximately evenly spaced (so that they cannot see each other's hand of cards).

The pack or deck

A card game is played with a pack of cards intended for that game. The pack consists of a fixed number of pieces of printed cardboard known as *cards*. The cards in a pack are identical in size and shape. Each card has two sides, the *face* and the *back*. The backs of the cards in a pack are indistinguishable. The faces of the cards in a pack may all be unique, or may include duplicates, depending on the game. In either case, any card is readily identifiable by its face.

The set of cards that make up the pack will be known to all of the players using that pack.

Pack is British English; *deck* is U.S. English. They mean the same thing.

However, there are some card games that require multiple decks. In this scenario, a "deck" refers to a set of 52 cards or a single deck, while a "pack" refers to the collection of "decks" as a whole.

The deal

Dealing is done either clockwise or counterclockwise. If this is omitted from the rules, then it should be assumed to be:

- clockwise for games from North America, North and West Europe and Russia;
- counterclockwise for South and East Europe and Asia, also for Swiss games and all Tarot games.

A player is chosen to deal. That person takes all of the cards in the pack, stacks them together so that they are all the same way up and the same way round, and shuffles them. There are various techniques of shuffling, all intended to put the cards into a random order. During the shuffle, dealer holds the cards so that she and the other players cannot see any of their faces.

Shuffling should continue until the chance of a card remaining next to the one that was originally next to is small. In practice, many dealers do not shuffle for long enough to achieve this.

After the shuffle, the dealer offers the deck to another player to *cut the deck*. If the deal is clockwise, this is the player on her right; if counter-clockwise, it is the player on her left. The invitation to cut is made by placing the pack, face downward, on the table near the player who is to cut: who then lifts the upper portion of the pack clear of the lower portion and places it alongside. The formerly lower portion is then replaced on top of the formerly upper portion.

The dealer then *deals* the cards. This is done by dealer holding the pack, face-down, in one hand, and removing cards from the top of it with her other hand to distribute to the players, placing them face-down on the table in front of the players to whom they are dealt. The rules of the game will specify the details of the deal. It normally starts with the players next to the dealer in the direction of play (left in a clockwise game; right in an anticlockwise one), and continues in

the same direction around the table. The cards may be dealt one at a time, or in groups. Unless the rules specify otherwise, assume that the cards are dealt one at a time. Unless the rules specify otherwise, assume that all the cards are dealt out; but in many games, some remain undealt, and are left face down in the middle of the table, forming the talon, skat, or stock. The player who received the first card from the deal may be known as eldest hand, or as forehand.

The set of cards dealt to a player is known as his or her *hand*.

Throughout the shuffle, cut, and deal, the dealer should arrange that the players are unable to see the faces of any of the cards. The players should not try to see any of the faces. Should a card accidentally become exposed (visible to all), then normally any player can demand a redeal - that is, all the cards are gathered up, and the shuffle, cut and deal are repeated. Should a player accidentally see a card (other than one dealt to herself) she should admit this.

It is dishonest to try to see cards as they are dealt, or to take advantage of having seen a card accidentally.

When the deal is complete, all players pick up their cards and hold them in such a way that the faces can be seen by the holder of the cards but not the other players. It is helpful to fan one's cards out so that (if they have corner indices) all their values can be seen at once. In most games it is also useful to sort one's hand, rearranging the cards in a way appropriate to the game. For example in a trick taking game it is easier to have all one's cards of the same suit together, whereas in a rummy game one might sort them by rank or by potential combinations.

The rules

A new card game starts in a small way, either as someone's invention, or as a modification of an existing game. Those playing it may agree to change the rules as they wish. The rules that they agree on become the "house rules" under which they play the game. A set of house rules may be accepted as valid by a group of players wherever they play. It may also be accepted as governing all play within a particular house, café, or club.

When a game becomes sufficiently popular, so that people often play it with strangers, there is a need for a generally accepted set of rules. This is often met by a particular set of house rules becoming generally recognised. For example, when whist became popular in 18th-century England, players in the Portland Club agreed on a set of house rules for use on its premises. Players in some other clubs then agreed to follow the "Portland Club" rules, rather than go to the trouble of codifying and printing their own sets of rules. The Portland Club rules eventually became generally accepted throughout England.

There is nothing "official" about this process. If you decide to play whist seriously, it would be sensible to learn the Portland Club rules, so that you can play with other people who already know these rules. But if you only play whist with your family, you are likely to ignore these rules, and just use what rules you choose. And if you play whist seriously with a group of friends, you are still perfectly free to devise your own set of rules, should you want to.

It is sometimes said that the "official" or "correct" sets of rules governing a card game are those "in Hoyle". Edmond Hoyle was an 18th-century Englishman who published a number of books about card games. His books were popular, especially his treatise on how to become a good whist player. After (and even before) his death, many publishers have taken advantage of his popularity by placing his name on their books of rules. The presence of his name on a rule

book has no significance at all. The rules given in the book may be no more than the opinion of the author.

If there is a sense in which a card game can have an "official" set of rules, it is when that card game has an "official" governing body. For example, the rules of tournament bridge are governed by the World Bridge Federation, and by local bodies in various countries such as the ACBL in the USA, and the EBU in England. The rules of skat in Germany are governed by the Deutsche Skatverband which publishes the *Skatordnung*. The rules of French tarot are governed by the Fédération Française de Tarot. But there is no compulsion to follow the rules put out by these organisations. If you and your friends decide to play a game by a set of rules unknown to the game's official body, you are doing nothing illegal.

Many widely-played card games have no official regulating body. An example is Canasta.

Rule infractions

An infraction is any action which is against the rules of the game, such as playing a card when it is not one's turn to play and the accidental exposure of a card.

In many official sets of rules for card games, the rules specifying the penalties for various infractions occupy more pages than the rules specifying how to play correctly. This is tedious, but necessary for games that are played seriously. Players who intend to play a card game at a high level generally ensure before beginning that all agree on the penalties to be used. When playing privately, this will normally be a question of agreeing house rules. In a tournament there will probably be a tournament director who will enforce the rules when required and arbitrate in cases of doubt.

If a player breaks the rules of a game deliberately, this is cheating. Most card players would refuse to play cards with a known cheat. The rest of this section is therefore about accidental infractions, caused by ignorance, clumsiness, inattention, etc.

As the same game is played repeatedly among a group of players, precedents build up about how a particular infraction of the rules should be handled. E.G. "Sheila just led a card when it wasn't her turn. Last week when Jo did that, we agreed ... etc.". Sets of such precedents tend to become established among groups of players, and to be regarded as part of the house rules. Sets of house rules become formalised, as described in the previous section. Therefore, for some games, there is a "proper" way of handling infractions of the rules. But for many games, without governing bodies, there is no standard way of handling infractions.

In many circumstances, there is no need for special rules dealing with what happens after an infraction. As a general principle, the person who broke a rule should not benefit by it, and the other players should not lose by it. An exception to this may be made in games with fixed partnerships, in which it may be felt that the partner(s) of the person who broke a rule should also not benefit. The penalty for an accidental infraction should be as mild as reasonable, consistent with there being no possible benefit to the person responsible.

Types of card games

Trick-taking games

See also trick-taking games

- 500
- Cassino
- Bridge
- Écarté
- Euchre
- Hearts
- Pinochle
- Piquet
- ROOK
- Spades
- Sixty-three
- Sueca (game)
- Whist
- Wizard
- Pairs(u/c)

Rummy-style games

- 500 Rum
- Canasta
- Concentration
- Durak
- Five Crowns
- Gin rummy
- Go Fish
- Haihowak
- Happy Families
- Jolly
- Kemps
- Robbers' rummy
- Seven Bridge
- Shanghai rum
- Spoons/donkey
- Tonk
- Tri
- Wyatt Earp
- Steal the old man's pack

Casino or gambling card games

See also [casino](#) or [gambling](#)

- Baccarat

- Bingo
- Blackjack
- Blind Hookey
- Bouré
- Cribbage
- **Poker**
- Primero
- Red dog
- **Texas hold 'em**
- Thirty-one
- Three card brag

Solitaire (or Patience) games

- Ace of the Pile
- Baker's Dozen (solitaire)
- Calculation
- Concentration
- FreeCell
- Kings in the Corner (multi-player)
- Klondike
- Russian Bank
- Solitaire Showdown

Shedding games

- Bartok / Bartog
- Bullshit
- California Speed
- Chase the Ace/Old Maid
- Craits
- Crazy Eights
- Eleusis
- Mao
- President
- Shichi Narabe
- Shithead
- Spit / Speed
- Spite and Malice
- Tien len
- UNO

Accumulating games

- Beggar-My-Neighbour
- Egyptian Ratscrew
- Seven Spades
- Slapjack
- Snap
- Top Trumps
- War

Multi-genre games

- Eleusis
- Poke
- Skitgubbe
- Tichu
- Tripoli

Collectible card games (CCG's)

- Duelmasters
- Magic: The Gathering
- Pokémon
- Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game

Other card games

- 1000 Blank White Cards
- Blitz
- Bohnanza
- Chez Geek
- Chrononauts
- Flinch
- Fluxx
- GOLF
- Gother Than Thou
- Grass
- Hanafuda
- Illuminati
- Karuta
- Lucky Seven
- Mille Bournes
- Munchkin
- Mus
- Numero

- Pens
- Pit
- Pits
- Scopa
- Scopone
- Set
- Sheepshead
- LeCardo

Fictional card games

- Cripple Mr Onion - from the Discworld book series
- Diamondback - from the Cerebus comics
- Double Fanucci - from the Zork series
- Dragon Poker - from the MythAdventures novels
- Fizzbin - from the original Star Trek
- Pazzak - from the Knights of the Old Republic video game
- Pyramid - from the Battlestar Galactica series
- Sabacc - from the Star Wars universe
- Tall Card - from the Firefly television series
- Triple Triad - from the Final Fantasy VIII video game

See also

- [Playing card](#)

Online gambling

Online gambling takes several forms. This article provides a brief introduction to some of those, as well as discussing general issues.

Online poker

Main article: [online poker](#)

There are a large number of online poker rooms which offer various games of [Poker](#), most commonly [Texas hold 'em](#), but also [Omaha](#), [Seven-card stud](#), and other game types. Players play against each other, with the "house" making its money through the "[rake](#)".

Online casinos

Main article: [online casino](#)

There are a large number of [online casinos](#), in which people can play [casino games](#) such as Roulette, Blackjack, Craps, and many others. These games are played against the "house", which

makes money due to the fact that the odds are slightly in its favour. Some unscrupulous sites have been proven to offer rigged games, which are less mathematically fair than they appear.

Online betting

Several major bookmakers offer fixed-odds gambling over the internet, with gamblers typically betting on the results of sporting events.

A relatively new internet innovation is the bet exchange, which allows individuals to place bets with each other (with the "house" taking a small commission).

Funds transfers

Typically, gamblers upload funds to the online gambling company, make bets or play the games that it offers, and then cash out any winnings. European gamblers can often fund gambling accounts by credit card or debit card, and cash out winnings directly back to the card.

Because of the questionable legality of online gambling in the United States, however, U.S. credit cards frequently fail to be accepted. However, a number of intermediary companies - such as Firepay, Neteller, and Moneybookers - offer accounts with which (among other things) online gambling can be funded.

Payment by cheque and wire transfer is also common.

General legal issues

Online gambling is legal and regulated in many countries including the United Kingdom and several nations in and around the Caribbean Sea.

While the United States Federal Appeals Courts has ruled that the Federal Wire Act prohibits electronic transmission of information for sports betting across state lines, there is no law prohibiting [gambling](#) of any other kind [1].

However, some states have specific laws against online gambling of any kind. Also, owning an online gaming operation without proper licensing would be illegal, and no states are currently granting online gaming licenses.

The government of the island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, which licenses Internet gambling entities, made a complaint to the World Trade Organization about the U.S. government's actions to impede online gaming. The Caribbean country won the preliminary ruling but WTO's appeals body has partially reversed that favorable ruling in April, 2005. The appeals decision effectively allowed state laws prohibiting gambling in Louisiana, Massachusetts, South Dakota and Utah. However, the appeals panel also ruled that the United States may be violating global trade rules because its laws regulating horse-racing bets were not applied equitably to foreign and domestic online betting companies. The panel also held that certain online gambling restrictions imposed under US federal laws were inconsistent with the trade body's GATS services agreement.

In March 2003, Deputy Assistant Attorney General John G. Malcolm testified before the Senate Banking Committee regarding the special problems presented by online gambling [2]. A major concern of the United States Department of Justice is online money laundering. The

anonymous nature of the Internet and the use of encryption make it especially difficult to trace online money laundering transactions.

In April 2004 Google and Yahoo!, the internet's two largest search engines, announced that they were removing online gambling advertising from their sites. The move followed a United States Department of Justice announcement that, in what some say is a contradiction of the Appeals Court ruling, the Wire Act relating to telephone betting applies to all forms of Internet gambling, and that any advertising of such gambling "may" be deemed as aiding and abetting. Critics of the Justice Department's move say that it has no legal basis for pressuring companies to remove advertisements and that the advertisements are protected by the First Amendment. As of April 2005, Yahoo! has provided advertising for "play money" online gaming.

In February 2005 the North Dakota House of Representatives passed a bill to legalize and regulate online poker and online poker cardroom operators in the State. Testifying before the State Senate, the CEO of one online cardroom, Paradise Poker, pledged to relocate to the state if the bill became law. However, the measure was defeated by the State Senate in March 2005. Jim Kasper, the Representative who sponsored the bill, plans a 2006 ballot initiative on the topic.

Problem gambling

Because the internet brings gambling right into a player's home, there is concern that online gambling increases the level of problem gambling. In the United States, the link between availability and problem gambling was investigated in 1999 by the National Gambling Impact Study, which found that "the presence of a gambling facility within 50 miles roughly doubles the prevalence of problem and pathological gamblers". If this finding is correct, it is reasonable to expect that easy access to gambling online would also increase problem gambling.

That same report noted the possibility that "the high-speed instant gratification of Internet games and the high level of privacy they offer may exacerbate problem and pathological gambling". Bernie Horn, of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, testified before Congress that the availability of online gambling "magnifies the potential destructiveness of the addiction".

License

Copyright © version 1.0 2006 by [Nicolae Sfetcu](#). Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation; with no Invariant Sections, with no Front-Cover Texts, and with no Back-Cover Texts. A copy of the license can be found in [this page](#), as well as at the [GNU Free Documentation License](#).

This book, in all its versions (also those modified from third parties in italian, english or whichever other language), for will of the authors, may be reproduced also integrally without violating any law in as much as this book is released under the [GNU Free Documentation License](#).

This book:

- May be modified partially or integrally creating manuals for companies, agencies or persons who deal with formatting, changing either the diagram or the contents or the pagination.
- May be distributed either in its original or in modified form, or either in electronic or in paper format from either field periodicals or not, Internet sites and whichever other medium.
- May be used as internal manual by companies, public or private agencies, or universities .
- May be used distributed by universities as a hand-out.
- May even be resold without having to recognize any type of royalty to the authors on the condition that the purchasers be granted the freedom of making even integral copies, redistribute or resell them.

[GNU Free Documentation](#)

GNU Free Documentation

GNU Free Documentation License

Version 1.2, November 2002

Copyright (C) 2000,2001,2002 Free Software Foundation, Inc. 51 Franklin St, Fifth Floor, Boston, MA 02110-1301 USA Everyone is permitted to copy and distribute verbatim copies of this license document, but changing it is not allowed.

0. PREAMBLE

The purpose of this License is to make a manual, textbook, or other functional and useful document "free" in the sense of freedom: to assure everyone the effective freedom to copy and redistribute it, with or without modifying it, either commercially or noncommercially.

Secondarily, this License preserves for the author and publisher a way to get credit for their work, while not being considered responsible for modifications made by others.

This License is a kind of "copyleft", which means that derivative works of the document must themselves be free in the same sense. It complements the GNU General Public License, which is a copyleft license designed for free software.

We have designed this License in order to use it for manuals for free software, because free software needs free documentation: a free program should come with manuals providing the same freedoms that the software does. But this License is not limited to software manuals; it can be used for any textual work, regardless of subject matter or whether it is published as a printed book. We recommend this License principally for works whose purpose is instruction or reference.

1. APPLICABILITY AND DEFINITIONS

This License applies to any manual or other work, in any medium, that contains a notice placed by the copyright holder saying it can be distributed under the terms of this License. Such a notice grants a world-wide, royalty-free license, unlimited in duration, to use that work under the conditions stated herein. The "Document", below, refers to any such manual or work. Any member of the public is a licensee, and is addressed as "you". You accept the license if you copy, modify or distribute the work in a way requiring permission under copyright law.

A "Modified Version" of the Document means any work containing the Document or a portion of it, either copied verbatim, or with modifications and/or translated into another language.

A "Secondary Section" is a named appendix or a front-matter section of the Document that deals exclusively with the relationship of the publishers or authors of the Document to the Document's overall subject (or to related matters) and contains nothing that could fall directly within that overall subject. (Thus, if the Document is in part a textbook of mathematics, a Secondary Section may not explain any mathematics.) The relationship could be a matter of historical connection with the subject or with related matters, or of legal, commercial, philosophical, ethical or political position regarding them.

The "Invariant Sections" are certain Secondary Sections whose titles are designated, as being those of Invariant Sections, in the notice that says that the Document is released under this License. If a section does not fit the above definition of Secondary then it is not allowed to be designated as Invariant. The Document may contain zero Invariant Sections. If the Document does not identify any Invariant Sections then there are none.

The "Cover Texts" are certain short passages of text that are listed, as Front-Cover Texts or Back-Cover Texts, in the notice that says that the Document is released under this License. A Front-Cover Text may be at most 5 words, and a Back-Cover Text may be at most 25 words.

A "Transparent" copy of the Document means a machine-readable copy, represented in a format whose specification is available to the general public, that is suitable for revising the document straightforwardly with generic text editors or (for images composed of pixels) generic paint programs or (for drawings) some widely available drawing editor, and that is suitable for input to text formatters or for automatic translation to a variety of formats suitable for input to text formatters. A copy made in an otherwise Transparent file format whose markup, or absence of markup, has been arranged to thwart or discourage subsequent modification by readers is not

Transparent. An image format is not Transparent if used for any substantial amount of text. A copy that is not "Transparent" is called "Opaque".

Examples of suitable formats for Transparent copies include plain ASCII without markup, Texinfo input format, LaTeX input format, SGML or XML using a publicly available DTD, and standard-conforming simple HTML, PostScript or PDF designed for human modification. Examples of transparent image formats include PNG, XCF and JPG. Opaque formats include proprietary formats that can be read and edited only by proprietary word processors, SGML or XML for which the DTD and/or processing tools are not generally available, and the machine-generated HTML, PostScript or PDF produced by some word processors for output purposes only.

The "Title Page" means, for a printed book, the title page itself, plus such following pages as are needed to hold, legibly, the material this License requires to appear in the title page. For works in formats which do not have any title page as such, "Title Page" means the text near the most prominent appearance of the work's title, preceding the beginning of the body of the text.

A section "Entitled XYZ" means a named subunit of the Document whose title either is precisely XYZ or contains XYZ in parentheses following text that translates XYZ in another language. (Here XYZ stands for a specific section name mentioned below, such as "Acknowledgements", "Dedications", "Endorsements", or "History".) To "Preserve the Title" of such a section when you modify the Document means that it remains a section "Entitled XYZ" according to this definition.

The Document may include Warranty Disclaimers next to the notice which states that this License applies to the Document. These Warranty Disclaimers are considered to be included by reference in this License, but only as regards disclaiming warranties: any other implication that these Warranty Disclaimers may have is void and has no effect on the meaning of this License.

2. VERBATIM COPYING

You may copy and distribute the Document in any medium, either commercially or noncommercially, provided that this License, the copyright notices, and the license notice saying this License applies to the Document are reproduced in all copies, and that you add no other conditions whatsoever to those of this License. You may not use technical measures to obstruct or control the reading or further copying of the copies you make or distribute. However, you may accept compensation in exchange for copies. If you distribute a large enough number of copies you must also follow the conditions in section 3.

You may also lend copies, under the same conditions stated above, and you may publicly display copies.

3. COPYING IN QUANTITY

If you publish printed copies (or copies in media that commonly have printed covers) of the Document, numbering more than 100, and the Document's license notice requires Cover Texts, you must enclose the copies in covers that carry, clearly and legibly, all these Cover Texts: Front-Cover Texts on the front cover, and Back-Cover Texts on the back cover. Both covers must also clearly and legibly identify you as the publisher of these copies. The front cover must present the full title with all words of the title equally prominent and visible. You may add other material on the covers in addition. Copying with changes limited to the covers, as long as they preserve the title of the Document and satisfy these conditions, can be treated as verbatim copying in other respects.

If the required texts for either cover are too voluminous to fit legibly, you should put the first ones listed (as many as fit reasonably) on the actual cover, and continue the rest onto adjacent pages.

If you publish or distribute Opaque copies of the Document numbering more than 100, you must either include a machine-readable Transparent copy along with each Opaque copy, or state in or with each Opaque copy a computer-network location from which the general network-using public has access to download using public-standard network protocols a complete Transparent copy of the Document, free of added material. If you use the latter option, you must take reasonably prudent steps, when you begin distribution of Opaque copies in quantity, to ensure that this Transparent copy will remain thus accessible at the stated location until at least one year after the last time you distribute an Opaque copy (directly or through your agents or retailers) of that edition to the public.

It is requested, but not required, that you contact the authors of the Document well before redistributing any large number of copies, to give them a chance to provide you with an updated version of the Document.

4. MODIFICATIONS

You may copy and distribute a Modified Version of the Document under the conditions of sections 2 and 3 above, provided that you release the Modified Version under precisely this License, with the Modified Version filling the role of the Document, thus licensing distribution and modification of the Modified Version to whoever possesses a copy of it. In addition, you must do these things in the Modified Version:

- **A.** Use in the Title Page (and on the covers, if any) a title distinct from that of the Document, and from those of previous versions (which should, if there were any, be listed in the History section of the Document). You may use the same title as a previous version if the original publisher of that version gives permission.
- **B.** List on the Title Page, as authors, one or more persons or entities responsible for authorship of the modifications in the Modified Version, together with at least five of the principal authors of the Document (all of its principal authors, if it has fewer than five), unless they release you from this requirement.
- **C.** State on the Title page the name of the publisher of the Modified Version, as the publisher.
- **D.** Preserve all the copyright notices of the Document.
- **E.** Add an appropriate copyright notice for your modifications adjacent to the other copyright notices.
- **F.** Include, immediately after the copyright notices, a license notice giving the public permission to use the Modified Version under the terms of this License, in the form shown in the Addendum below.
- **G.** Preserve in that license notice the full lists of Invariant Sections and required Cover Texts given in the Document's license notice.
- **H.** Include an unaltered copy of this License.
- **I.** Preserve the section Entitled "History", Preserve its Title, and add to it an item stating at least the title, year, new authors, and publisher of the Modified

Version as given on the Title Page. If there is no section Entitled "History" in the Document, create one stating the title, year, authors, and publisher of the Document as given on its Title Page, then add an item describing the Modified Version as stated in the previous sentence.

- **J.** Preserve the network location, if any, given in the Document for public access to a Transparent copy of the Document, and likewise the network locations given in the Document for previous versions it was based on. These may be placed in the "History" section. You may omit a network location for a work that was published at least four years before the Document itself, or if the original publisher of the version it refers to gives permission.
- **K.** For any section Entitled "Acknowledgements" or "Dedications", Preserve the Title of the section, and preserve in the section all the substance and tone of each of the contributor acknowledgements and/or dedications given therein.
- **L.** Preserve all the Invariant Sections of the Document, unaltered in their text and in their titles. Section numbers or the equivalent are not considered part of the section titles.
- **M.** Delete any section Entitled "Endorsements". Such a section may not be included in the Modified Version.
- **N.** Do not retitle any existing section to be Entitled "Endorsements" or to conflict in title with any Invariant Section.
- **O.** Preserve any Warranty Disclaimers.

If the Modified Version includes new front-matter sections or appendices that qualify as Secondary Sections and contain no material copied from the Document, you may at your option designate some or all of these sections as invariant. To do this, add their titles to the list of Invariant Sections in the Modified Version's license notice. These titles must be distinct from any other section titles.

You may add a section Entitled "Endorsements", provided it contains nothing but endorsements of your Modified Version by various parties--for example, statements of peer review or that the text has been approved by an organization as the authoritative definition of a standard.

You may add a passage of up to five words as a Front-Cover Text, and a passage of up to 25 words as a Back-Cover Text, to the end of the list of Cover Texts in the Modified Version. Only one passage of Front-Cover Text and one of Back-Cover Text may be added by (or through arrangements made by) any one entity. If the Document already includes a cover text for the same cover, previously added by you or by arrangement made by the same entity you are acting on behalf of, you may not add another; but you may replace the old one, on explicit permission from the previous publisher that added the old one.

The author(s) and publisher(s) of the Document do not by this License give permission to use their names for publicity for or to assert or imply endorsement of any Modified Version.

5. COMBINING DOCUMENTS

You may combine the Document with other documents released under this License, under the terms defined in section 4 above for modified versions, provided that you include in the combination all of the Invariant Sections of all of the original documents, unmodified, and list

them all as Invariant Sections of your combined work in its license notice, and that you preserve all their Warranty Disclaimers.

The combined work need only contain one copy of this License, and multiple identical Invariant Sections may be replaced with a single copy. If there are multiple Invariant Sections with the same name but different contents, make the title of each such section unique by adding at the end of it, in parentheses, the name of the original author or publisher of that section if known, or else a unique number. Make the same adjustment to the section titles in the list of Invariant Sections in the license notice of the combined work.

In the combination, you must combine any sections Entitled "History" in the various original documents, forming one section Entitled "History"; likewise combine any sections Entitled "Acknowledgements", and any sections Entitled "Dedications". You must delete all sections Entitled "Endorsements."

6. COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS

You may make a collection consisting of the Document and other documents released under this License, and replace the individual copies of this License in the various documents with a single copy that is included in the collection, provided that you follow the rules of this License for verbatim copying of each of the documents in all other respects.

You may extract a single document from such a collection, and distribute it individually under this License, provided you insert a copy of this License into the extracted document, and follow this License in all other respects regarding verbatim copying of that document.

7. AGGREGATION WITH INDEPENDENT WORKS

A compilation of the Document or its derivatives with other separate and independent documents or works, in or on a volume of a storage or distribution medium, is called an "aggregate" if the copyright resulting from the compilation is not used to limit the legal rights of the compilation's users beyond what the individual works permit. When the Document is included in an aggregate, this License does not apply to the other works in the aggregate which are not themselves derivative works of the Document.

If the Cover Text requirement of section 3 is applicable to these copies of the Document, then if the Document is less than one half of the entire aggregate, the Document's Cover Texts may be placed on covers that bracket the Document within the aggregate, or the electronic equivalent of covers if the Document is in electronic form. Otherwise they must appear on printed covers that bracket the whole aggregate.

8. TRANSLATION

Translation is considered a kind of modification, so you may distribute translations of the Document under the terms of section 4. Replacing Invariant Sections with translations requires special permission from their copyright holders, but you may include translations of some or all Invariant Sections in addition to the original versions of these Invariant Sections. You may include a translation of this License, and all the license notices in the Document, and any Warranty Disclaimers, provided that you also include the original English version of this License and the original versions of those notices and disclaimers. In case of a disagreement between the translation and the original version of this License or a notice or disclaimer, the original version will prevail.

If a section in the Document is Entitled "Acknowledgements", "Dedications", or "History", the requirement (section 4) to Preserve its Title (section 1) will typically require changing the actual title.

9. TERMINATION

You may not copy, modify, sublicense, or distribute the Document except as expressly provided for under this License. Any other attempt to copy, modify, sublicense or distribute the Document is void, and will automatically terminate your rights under this License. However, parties who have received copies, or rights, from you under this License will not have their licenses terminated so long as such parties remain in full compliance.

10. FUTURE REVISIONS OF THIS LICENSE

The Free Software Foundation may publish new, revised versions of the GNU Free Documentation License from time to time. Such new versions will be similar in spirit to the present version, but may differ in detail to address new problems or concerns. See <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/>.

Each version of the License is given a distinguishing version number. If the Document specifies that a particular numbered version of this License "or any later version" applies to it, you have the option of following the terms and conditions either of that specified version or of any later version that has been published (not as a draft) by the Free Software Foundation. If the Document does not specify a version number of this License, you may choose any version ever published (not as a draft) by the Free Software Foundation.